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ARGOSY

STORIES BY

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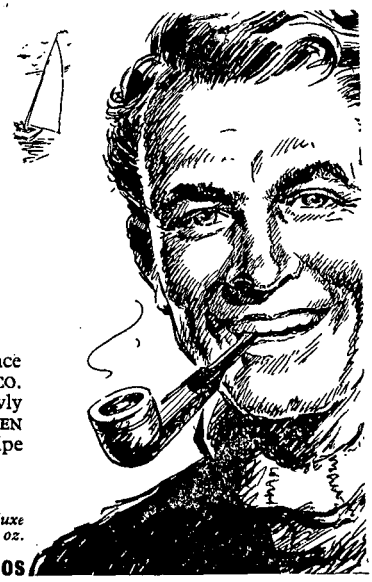

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ARGOSY

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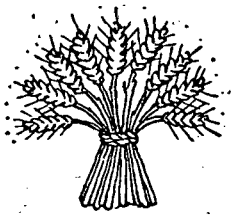
Pastorale

ALWAYS I love the long hill falling
Steep to the plainland and the cloudland.
Westward and southward always I follow
The hammer of grey light slenderly tapping,
Beating the bannered oasts and farmsteads—
All the russet and purple and green of the Weald—
Into a jewelled and intricate shield.

Always I love the islanded oaks recalling
The lost illimitable province of Anderida,
Now harnessed with ribboning roads, now groomed and glowing
With wavering orchard and coppice and field,
Where the shadow-swathes and the sunspill are flowing.

JOHN ALDEN



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DEAR PRUDENCE

A million and a quarter in gold would be awfully hard for a nice girl to explain

by MICHAEL FOSTER

WITH far blue sea-distances still in her eyes, she sat in the wintry twilight of her mother's New England parlour, cautiously drinking a cup of tea.

"I am sure you have done most wisely, Prudence, to come home to your proper surroundings," her mother said. Her mother had a gentle die-away voice. But a voice in which you knew everything had been thought out with care before it was spoken.

"The wild frontier is not suitable to a young woman of culture and refinement. Even though, as you say, San Francisco is quite a city by now. I know how careful you are, but I have had moments of worry about you." Delicately she held a thin-worn silver spoon. "I realize, of course, that as a school-teacher in San Francisco you would be spared any dismaying contacts with the frontier ruffians of the mining camps. Still, I have been somewhat concerned."

"Yes, mother," Prudence said. Demurely, she smoothed the wide skirt of her dove-grey dress. She was thinking of the fading sea-tracks of the great California clippers, slamming down to the Horn. This year of 1853: with the gold-rush of '49 nearly five years old.

"That dress is positively shabby," her mother said. "I must say it has given excellent service, worn in the schoolroom all this time that you have been gone. I knew when I bought the material that it was sensible and most serviceable. But before you seek a position in a school hereabouts, we must make you a new one. I shall give thought to it."

"Thank you, mother," Prudence said.

But she was thinking of the two big trunks that she had not dared to bring home. Her little old battered leather trunk with which she had left home, three years ago, was upstairs now in her girlhood room, scantily packed with the drab sensible clothes of an old-maid school-teacher. But the two other trunks, also battered with longer and harder travel—they were stuffed in theatrical carelessness with the most beautiful clothes: brocades and heavy

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stiff silks from China, massive jewellery and the sheerest of cambric underclothes and linen petticoats chaste with hand-made lace and embroidery.

When with her trunks she came down the gang-plank of the beautiful sea-stained clipper in New York, she had gone to a Broadway hotel, packed away her magnificent travelling costumes, had the two big trunks stored, and left the hotel in her shabby dull-grey—to come home to this sleepy little town in the New England hills.

Now, the snowy twilight was deepening in the crowded airless parlour, and her mother spoke again with a whisper of rusty black silk :

" So great a pity that we must always be poor and that you must be a school-teacher."

" Such nice women teach," Prudence said faintly. She was thinking of the million and a quarter dollars in gold which she had on deposit with Wells Fargo.

Her mother sighed, a sound as dim as the shadows in the old house.

" My greatest regret, since your dear father died, is that we could not have the finest music teachers for the cultivation of your voice. I have always thought you had a natural gift," her mother said.

With the trampling night-roar of the gold-camps still in her ears, Prudence heard the precise clink of her mother's tea-cup against its saucer.

" Oh, well. I'm just as glad my voice was never trained," she said—remembering the great roars of a thousand men when in reeking shack-halls she had sung to them the songs of home.

" And was the curriculum for your infant classes in San Francisco similar to that which is in use here ? " her mother asked.

" Oh—yes. Yes, indeed," Prudence said, nearly strangling on a swallow of tea. " Very, very similar. We had music, anyway."

" How nice," her mother said. " It is gratifying to know that my daughter has been among the band of devoted women bringing the graces of life to the wild west." Her small, exact cough put a neat period to her well-considered sentiment. " And now, dear Prudence, I have thought—in fact, to be truthful, I have promised —that you shall address the Literary and Discussion Club, at our meeting next month."

" Oh, mother, I—"

" You must give serious thought to the preparation of your remarks," her mother said firmly. " Naturally, you will tell them of the progress of education in that rude wilderness. But also, perhaps, even as quietly as my little girl lived there, she must have

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heard some talk of life in the gold-camps. Brief references to those immoral and murderous places will add spice to your lecture," her mother said daringly.

In a voice much, much dimmer than her mother's ever was, Prudence Ledyard murmured: "I'm sure it would . . ."

She was remembering the far, high gold-creeks; the bearded men toiling on the gravel-bars, and the camps of tents and shacks. The way, when the afternoon shadows lengthened across the blue-white turbulence of fast mountain water, the sun would linger in dusty reddish gold on the trunks of the Sierra pines. But the oaks were always grey and sometimes a man would be hanging there. Not very often, of course; it was rare enough so that it always gave one a bit of a start in passing by.

And she was remembering one night when she came back to the claim which Jack Trefethen had located for her—the stretch of creek from which later came her million and a quarter in raw gold. She had been away from the claim on a singing tour of the camps, earning enough gold to hire a gang of miners to build sluice-boxes and work her gravel bars for her.

Sometimes, on that tour, she would be singing in the great light of a towering fire in the open, with the silent forest standing all around; and leather bags of dust and nuggets falling with soft thuds about her feet. Anyway, travelling by stage-coach and then on horse-back, she had made her stake. And when she got back to her claim, it was being worked by four men who had come in from nowhere and taken possession. They seemed to think they were very tough fellows, too! When a woman alone walked up to their campfire and ordered them off, two of them, grinning, started towards her.

So she ran for her horse, in the darkness down creek, and fumbled in her saddle-bags. When she came walking back into that circle of firelight, with her skirts swirling about her ankles, her two revolvers were blasting, streaking smoky flame. Thumbing cylinders, as Jack Trefethen had taught her when he gave them to her for her protection on the roads, she was shooting at the feet of these four men. But the heavy awkward guns kicked so, jarring her arms, that the slugs were flying higher than she meant. The four men departed before any of them got killed. And that was how she got her California name!

Singing in the theatres of San Francisco, and in the camps, she had called herself Mrs. Ledyard—adding the imaginary "Mrs." to her maiden name—because a woman, especially an entertainer, was somewhat safer if it was believed she was married. But after the affair of the claim-jumpers and her big pistols, throughout all the gold-creeks she was known, with respect, as Madam Forty-four.

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"As you know, dear Prudence," her mother said, "our small Literary Club is founded upon broad-mindedness. We discuss freely the plight of orphans on city streets, we draw no moral distinctions. We do not shrink from mentioning fallen women, and actresses. We view the world as it is. So anything, dear, that you have heard of the rougher side of California will be sympathetically received. Especially, from the lips of innocence. Dear Prudence."

Feebly smoothing her dove-grey skirt again, "Yes, mother," said Madam Forty-four.

Her stiff-backed chair was facing the darkening snow-blue square of the parlour's front window. And suddenly her heart went shy with the butterfly colours of past spring-times, of a lonely dreaming girlhood. Along the snowy village street in the dusk came trotting the smartest turn-out in the district—a bright bay horse and a light sleigh, a cutter whose curved-up runners were delicate as iron lace, and whose dash-board and side-panels were tastefully rich with genuine hand-paintings of Alpine scenes and scroll-work. In that sleigh—the most elegant thing she had ever seen as a child—sat Hugo Matchett.

He was the same as her beating heart remembered: pale, aloof, of haughty poetic profile. He had on a fur cap, a beaver-skin rug covered his long knees, and his hands in dogskin gloves held tight reins on the fast-trotting horse. She knew that he was now cashier in his father's bank, and she guessed he was coming back from inspecting some stony hillside farm on which a loan was wanted. But he looked just the same as the boy who had never actually called on her.

On a winter's evening the great Matchett house blazed with light, and a girl hurrying by in shabby clothes could be all weak with the shining humbleness of youth and first silent love. And if she cried at night when her mother was asleep, she would rather have had those tears for him, who never called, than easy laughter with the boys who asked her for dates. When she was sixteen she had realized it was hopeless, and it had made it more beautiful to her, and made her more silent. It was said that his father was worth every cent of one hundred thousand dollars.

Her mother must have been watching her face now in the grey light of this winter evening, because the frail stern little old dear got up abruptly and with folded lips made a busy cheerfulness of gathering up their tea-things. And in passing, gave her daughter's shoulder a brisk, gentle pat.

That night, upstairs in her room, Prudence had to face her problem squarely. And she couldn't see any answer. A million and a quarter in gold would be awfully, awfully hard for a nice

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girl, a school-teacher, to explain. Prudence, having returned to her sweet, poor-as-a-church-mouse background, was deeply terrified.

The only way she ever could explain would be to tell the truth; and the story of Madam Forty-four of the gold-creeks would . . . Her senses practically reeled at the thought of what that story would do here. Grimly, she thought she had better have stayed in California, where she was thoroughly understood. And she would have, except . . . except . . . well, Hugo. That illusion, abiding with her, was still her weakness. She faced that, too. This bitter night.

Prudence, ready for bed, stood shivering in the middle of the cold New England bedroom of her girlhood. She had on a high-necked linen night-gown, buttoned almost up to the chin, with puffed long sleeves and voluminous skirt. She wished to heaven she had one of her richly heavy quilted satin dressing-gowns from her other trunks. It was bitterly cold, and she was brushing her hair. Meanwhile she was thinking, with a sort of horrified panic which she had never known even in the most hell-roaring moments of emergency in her other life.

Coming back into this room, perhaps, she had come back into the simple innocent ways of looking at things which in three years she had nearly forgotten. Her hair, swinging loose as she brushed it, was a cool burnished column in the tall pier-glass which had been in the family since before the Revolution.

She so wanted to tell her mother about all that gold, that raw wealth. But with the gold went music and pistols. She truly thought that her mother would either have a stroke, or else never show her face in public again. But on the other hand, if Prudence disclosed her wealth without telling the truth, a far more terrible suspicion would rock this prim New England town.

She could afford to build her mother a mansion that would make the Matchetts' house look poor. But Hugo! She could see his face at the mention of a woman who had been a public singer in the gold-camps, an entertainer. And suddenly Prudence giggled, thinking of Hugo's face if he ever heard of a woman who with a "forty-four" in each hand had fought burly greasy men for the rough gold of the earth.

So it was hopeless. After all. Only—only maybe Hugo might look at her now. She knew, glancing with strange shyness into the pier-glass of her childhood room, that she was more beautiful and more poised now. And defiantly, she knew, as innocent. If that was what they wanted—but they wouldn't ever believe it. Nobody but Jack Trefethen would believe it. He knew.

She actually had been teaching at a school in San Francisco, and

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Jack, then as poor as she was, had a friend who was manager of a new jerry-built theatre. So she had sung one night. She had sung *Annie Laurie.* And suddenly her future stood up roaring to her across the footlights from a thousand bearded, homesick throats . . .

There was a tap on her bedroom door and her mother came in. "How sweet you look, my dear," the faded voice said. "You haven't changed a bit." Tiptoeing, because Prudence was tall, her mother kissed her on the brow. "My little girl is home again. This house remembers the night you were born. I think it blesses you now with its peace."

Turning away to hide her face, Prudence started plaiting her hair.

"My dear, my dear," her mother said, "one—one can be happy in meekness."

"I'll see," said Prudence obediently.

She saw the next morning, in front of the village post-office. In her shabby dove-grey and her school-teacher's tippet, she had gone down to discover whether there might be a letter for their quiet household. She had timed it about right, for Hugo was just coming out of the post-office door with the important-looking bundle of that day's mail for the bank.

Only half-ashamed, she remembered how childishly expert she used to be in knowing when and where to meet him accidentally in the street. Breathless as a young girl, she dared not trust herself to speak first. But she lifted up her eyes to him.

"Good morning, Prudence," he said. He raised his hat. About half an inch he raised it, holding the bank's mail firmly in his other hand.

"Why—Hugo!" she said in a deeply thrilled contralto. "Imagine meeting you, of all people—my very first morning home—from California."

"Yes," he said. "I believe someone mentioned yesterday that you had come back."

"Oh, Hugo," she said. "I—"

"California must have been very interesting," he said. "I believe that commercially it has a great future. Well, it has been pleasant to see you again, Prudence." Once more he lifted his hat with the utmost courtesy, at least a full inch this time. He had such silky black hair, tossed back from the brow but so neatly parted.

"Good day," he said, and his heavy overcoat swung so richly, with such assurance, as he walked away.

And Prudence, in her grey shabbiness, had a pure California

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thought: "Damn your eyes, some day—some night—you are going to see *me* in my good clothes!"

But she did not go into the post-office. She walked home so slowly, in the hard crispness of the sunlit snow. A half-block away from the scrolled front door, she began hearing the hard ringing of an axe on the woodpile in their yard.

"The strangest man came to the door," her mother said. "A gentleman, I am sure, but in such seedy finery. Obviously, one who perhaps through no fault of his own has fallen upon evil days—but quite sober. Else I should not have said at once: 'My good man, go around to the back door.' I am very careful about tramps. But I wished to spare him the embarrassment of asking. He had his mouth open."

Absently, Prudence took off her tippet. And slung it into a chair.

"He had such nice sad eyes. I think he is a man who has suffered," her mother said. "So at the back door I told him: 'My good man, when you have split a full cord of our hard maple, you shall have a sandwich.' He seemed so grateful, but strange. His eyes were a sort of greeny-blue. But honest eyes."

Prudence took off her shabby gloves and slung them after the tippet.

"He had the reddest hair I have ever seen," her mother said.

Prudence reached up to take off her hat. And stopped with her hands half-way to her head.

"And such a lovely southern drawl," her mother said. "I shall not only give him a sandwich. I shall heat up last night's pudding for him."

Putting one foot carefully in front of the other, Prudence started walking. She walked down the dark hall, through the kitchen, and out of the back door. She walked across the snow, and around the corner of the woodshed into the yard. And there was Jack Trefethen chopping wood.

His silk stove-pipe hat was on the back of his head, busted and dented, as if somebody had kicked it: his expensive frock-coat was muddy and ripped up the seam on one side, and his boiled shirt looked as if six other tramps had slept in it, by turns, for a week. In sun-glinting whirls of the axe-blade, he was chopping knotty New England maple chunks. The third richest man—and the mildest tough one—of all the California gold-creeks.

"So you've had another fight," Prudence said. "Another one! Now you see why I won't marry you. Look at your coat!"

"Your mother looked at it," Jack said, reaching for another maple-chunk.

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" I hope you choke on your damned sandwich," Prudence said, sitting down on the snow-crusted saw-horse. " So you followed me home after all—when I told you it was good-bye and that I never wanted to see your face again. Why can't you take a thousand ' no's ' for one answer ? How did you get here so soon ? "

" Prue, honey, I love your temperament. But where did you get those clothes ? You don't look like yourself."

" Oh ! So you don't like my clothes. You're a fine one to talk."

" Quarrel again. Always quarrel. I love you. But let's be logical, sugar-foots," he said in his North Carolina softness. " Let's ignore the way we both look, and take one thing at a time. I told you, at the quay, I'd never take no for an answer." A maple-chunk flew in two, and one half of it hit the back of the woodshed. " Shall we take up your hurried questions one at a time, darling, darling ? "

" Another fight, you've had. Where's your watch ? Where are your diamond studs ? "

" Right here," he said. He laid the axe against the wood-block and reached a big, freckled hand with cracked knuckles into the tail-pocket of his frock-coat. He showed them to her : the watch with a couple of pounds of nuggets on its looped chain, a handful of clear-shining diamonds.

" All m' life, down home in Raleigh, North Carolina, I heard about the toughs in the big city, along New York streets after dark. Why, hell, honey, they wouldn't last through two bar-drinks in Hangtown. I'll own up, I was scared, but I was able to hold 'em off with one hand while I took m' diamond studs out of m' shirt and put m' watch in m' pocket. Then we could get down to business . . . I guess it was mighty vulgar, Prue. What else do you want to know ? "

So two millionaires from the raw country of the sun looked at each other coldly over a New England woodpile.

" My mother says she's going to give you some pudding, too. You tramp."

" Well, now, that's right nice of your mother," he said.

" You are confusing the issue," she said with dignity. " I asked you how you got here so soon. Just one day behind me."

" When your ship sailed I bought me a ticket, honey, for the next ship. But I got off and cut across the Isthmus of Panama. On a mule. Through the jungle. I thought of you when I saw all those flowers. But also there were mosquitoes," he said cheerfully.

" Give me your hat," she said. " Maybe I can take some of the worst dents out of it."

He took it off and handed it to her. His spectacularly red head flamed in the pale New England sunlight. With angry thumps

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of her fingers she poked at the white satin lining inside the stove-pipe, trying to whack it somehow back into a semblance of shape.

"Now that I'm practically a guest at your home," he said, "having been received by your mother when I came to call—now will you marry me? After all, I have put the whole matter upon a social basis. You can consider me a conventional suitor, calling at your home. So won't you please marry me, dear sweet?"

"No," she said. "What's all this money doing in your hat? Wait a minute." From around the hatband and from a cut place in the lining she began pulling out paper money. They were nearly all hundred dollar bills; a few fifties.

"Oh. I think I remember putting them there," he said. "That was a different occasion, but equally confused. Upon the whole, I don't think I like New York."

"Be quiet," she said. "I'm counting." After a long time, she said: "Two thousand, six hundred and fifty dollars. Put it in your pocket and remember that here you're not the bonanza boy, slinging sacks of dust and nuggets around. You are in civilization now. Are you going to be a rowdy fighter all your life?"

"Not after you marry me," he said. "I aim for carpet slippers. Of course, I'll take you on a honeymoon to Europe first."

"I can so vividly imagine our cultural progress from one ancient city to another," she said. "Especially if you should lose your temper and wreck a hotel like that one you did in San Francisco. Oh, don't look so surprised. Don't think I didn't hear about it."

"Well, that was after the two hundred and forty-ninth time you said you never wanted to see my ugly face again," he said. "Not that I blame you, sugar, but I am very, very sensitive. Besides, I bought the damn hotel next day, so that made it all right. I didn't even fire the manager. In fact, I raised his wages."

"Here's your hat back," she said coldly. "I'm going in to read a book. Please do not ask for me while you are eating your sandwich. My mother would never understand."

"All right, Prue," he said miserably, chopping wood.

"I dislike you very much, for coming here," she said. "Do you still own that hotel?"

"I guess so . . . I turned it over to a friend of mine to run. Nice fellow, temporarily down on his luck."

"You'll die poor."

"Yes, Prue," he said. "Without you, I'm poor indeed."

So she went back into the house, and she did open a book. Sitting in the parlour, elevating her eyebrows in a cultivated expression, while she stared unseeing at the type. The *whack*

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whack ring of the axe in the yard went on with dogged patience.

"That poor young man," her mother said. "Perhaps somewhere in the world a woman's heart is aching."

"Ha!" said Prudence fiercely. "Ha!" And walked up the stairs to her room. But all the afternoon the ring *whack* ring of the wood-chopping was like a living presence in the house. Grimly she read that book, turning page after page. And towards dusk she heard him come into the kitchen for his sandwich. More than that, she heard the deep, slow, charming rumble of his voice, talking to her mother. Being captivating, he couldn't help it. But bitterly she knew that he would have sense enough not to tell her mother any truth at all.

So in the candle-light of the supper-table, her mother said dreamily: "—of such an excellent southern family. Truly excellent. Raleigh, I believe he said, North Carolina. Such a pity that they should so often be wild, these young men. I asked him why he did not go to California to repair his fortunes. I told him what a satisfactory position you had obtained there. He thanked me so nicely for my suggestion. Such courtly manners. I truly believe I helped another human being this afternoon. In fact, Prudence, he said that a kind word from a woman could often change a man's whole life."

"How poetical," Prudence said. "The carrots are burned."

For almost a week, nothing else happened. She had often thought how peaceful it was at home. She did not now permit herself even to think the word "dull." But it did seem so odd, for nothing ever to happen. Hugo continued to raise his hat politely every morning at the post-office; and she supposed that Jack had left town. She certainly could not enquire at the hotel, to make sure.

And then one morning when she had given up taking the trouble to go to the post-office in time to meet Hugo accidentally, she saw him standing in the front window of the bank, gazing with elaborate casualness at the street. As she passed, he came out of the door, hatless and smiling.

"Good morning, Prudence!" he said. He really was the handsomest man, in a conservative sort of way, that she had ever seen! Dismally she knew that to her he would always be the handsomest man she had ever seen.

"Such a splendid snow!" he said.

"Oh—yes. Isn't it?" she said. But she thought: "How strange." There hadn't been any fresh snow since she had been home. It was the same snow that had been on the ground all the time.

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"Perfect for sleighing!" he said enthusiastically. "I've been wondering—would you be inclined to go out with me next Sunday afternoon? We could have such a splendid drive along the country roads!"

Trying to control her breath was like trying to hold a bird in her hand. "Oh—yes," she said. "Oh, that would be so nice."

"Sunday afternoon, then," he said. "Immediately after lunch. Shall I call for you, say, at two o'clock?"

"Oh—yes," she said. "Yes."

For the first half of her way home, the ice on the twigs of the bare trees in sunlight was like flowers, the flowers of an unknown spring-time. But for the second half of the way home, she was thinking: "Why so suddenly?"

She found out why, that night. She had just blown out her candle and pulled the patchwork quilt up to her chin in the narrow bed of her childhood, when something came whizzing in through the open window, hit the wooden floor with an unearthly bang, and went rolling and thumping unevenly across the room. So she got up, and groped about for it in the darkness. It was a large stone, with a piece of paper carefully tied round it. She closed the window, pulled down the blind, and lit the candle again. The piece of paper, in large, ink-splattery writing, said: *Come down to the yard right away, honey. I think you are in trouble. Jack.*

She didn't dress, but just put on her heavy old coat, buttoning it up closely over her night-gown. She tiptoed down the stairs, so as not to awaken her mother, and at the kitchen door put on her countrified leather boots. Her heavy braids swung low, brushing her hands, as she bent over, fastening the buckles. She walked out and around the corner of the woodshed. In the starlit yard, in the blue-white of the snow, Jack said:

"You sure are pretty in—hm, *négligé*, honey."

"Say whatever you have to say, and say it quickly," she said crisply. "And this is not a *négligé*. It's my old winter coat. In my trunks I have some really—

"Now see here, Jack. I'm not in the mood for your nonsense. What did you mean by that silly note? With a stone, too. You might have broken the window."

"Now listen, sugar, this is serious," he said in the gravest voice she had ever heard him use. "I don't know anything about your personal affairs, I mean your money, or even if you've lost it. I suppose you have. Women can't handle money anyway. They need a strong, careful man."

"What in heaven's name are you talking about?"

"Well, I didn't exactly give up, I mean being an unsuccessful

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suitor, but I did go back to New York, you know, for a few days. Needed some new clothes. Aren't they handsome?"

"Oh, lord, grant me patience! What are you trying to say?"

"Well, I've got a right good friend in the New York office of Wells Fargo. You understand, I had to go there to draw me out some more money. For the clothes, and all."

"You ruffian, I'm freezing. Have you gone mad?"

"So this friend tells me something," Jack said. "He tells me that somebody in your local bank, here, has been making the most careful enquiries about how much money, if any, you've got on deposit with Wells Fargo. These investigations about you were done through regular banking channels, all very proper. Your postmaster must have talked about Wells Fargo mail you've been getting. Seems to have aroused interest."

Faintly, faintly, Prudence said, " . . . oh."

"Now looky here, Prue, even if you don't like me very much you know that I'm a friend. I'd be mighty proud to be able to help out in any little way, like an overdraft, or anything like that. You could pay me back sometime, Prue. I know what happens to money—oh, lordy, don't I know! I mean . . . You know . . . I guess I don't have much sense, but I sure would like to straighten this business up for you, whatever it is, if you'd just let me. I know you'll never marry me, honey, but—well I never will like any other woman. And you know that my dust is yours. Partner, dearest."

"Thank you, Jack," she said, so quietly. "I'm glad you came and told me about—about this."

"Well, now, sugar-foots, just let me go into your little home-town bank in the morning and sort of square things up. Whatever it is," he said. "I'll tell 'em it's your money—I'll tell 'em that I'm your California manager. I . . . I brought plenty along with me, to take care of anything."

"I'll take care of it myself, first thing in the morning," she said. "It's been—been a sort of oversight on my part. But . . . but Jack."

"Yes, honey?"

"Thanks, again. I . . . I think I'll go in, now."

"Well . . . goodnight," he said, turning away. "The reason I slung that stone at your open window, honey, I didn't think you'd want your mother to know about any—well, that you'd lost your money. I know how easy money's lost, but it's hell to explain."

She made her voice say evenly: "Goodnight, Jack."

So the next morning, with the tears of girlhood forever dried,

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she walked down to the bank. She was the first customer in. The door had just been opened.

"Good morning, good morning, Prudence!" Hugo said.

"'Morning," said Madam Forty-four. "I want to cash a draft right now on my account with Wells Fargo."

"Certainly," Hugo said. "Certainly, Prudence. Here is a pen and—"

"I'll make it out at the counter," she said.

She went to the counter and wrote a draft for one hundred thousand dollars. She wrote it carefully, and blotted it with care. She took it to the counter behind which Hugo stood beaming, and she laid it down in front of him.

He read it. And swallowed.

"Why, Prudence," he said. "I—"

"I'll take it in paper money, please," she said. "Gold is so heavy to carry. Large denominations, please, Hugo."

"But surely, Prudence, you don't need this large sum in our little town," he said. "As your banker—and, may I say, your friend—may I counsel you that any such—"

"It isn't what I need," said Madam Forty-four. "It's what I want. It's not always the same thing, Hugo. This morning, I want a hundred thousand dollars. Cash."

"I—I think I must speak to my father," he said. "I'm sure that some arrangement—oh, very quickly, very quickly, as soon as the post can reach Boston and return—"

"You mean that this bank does not have a hundred thousand dollars?" Prudence said, wide-eyed.

"Well, my dear, of course securities with our correspondents in the larger cities—we are perfectly able to take care of this, but it will take a little time—"

"Oh, but I want it this morning," Prudence said.

"—we can certainly advance you an amount which—" Hugo turned blindly towards the safe. "I—indeed, it will be a pleasure to—that is, in the meanwhile; and as soon as the post reaches Boston—"

"Oh dear, Hugo, never mind. It's not of importance." And with casual fingers, Madam Forty-four tore up the draft into small and then smaller pieces. And dropped them negligently in front of him.

As she was turning away from the counter, he stammered: "Sunday . . . Sunday afternoon at two . . ."

"I'm afraid that I shall be packing," she said. "For my return to California."

[redacted] dry sort of little sigh as she closed it.

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behind her. It was bitter, bitter cold in the street; but she saw Jack waiting on the next corner.

"Oh, hullo," she said. "You're such a thoughtful fellow, full of information—I bet you know when the next ship is sailing."

He didn't understand at first. He just looked at her with his greeny-blue eyes, under the thick sandy eyebrows—but very straight eyes. She said: "Would you mind getting our tickets?"

And then he did seem to know what she meant. To her terror, he turned whiter and whiter. Deathly white. And reached out blindly with one big hand, as if his eyes couldn't even see any more.

"... darling," he whispered. "Darling."

His eyes became seeing again, maybe the most seeing eyes she would ever know. Because they were seeing, so deeply, by a light that only he could know, a light of believing glory, that would never go out for him until the eyes themselves closed.

"Sure," he said. "Sure, honey. There's a packet-ship sailing next Tuesday for London and Europe. Oh, my girl, my girl—"

"I'm not talking about Europe," she said. "California."

Quietly now, he said: "Yes. You're right."

She said: "We've got to tell my mother something. We've got to explain somehow. We've got to make her understand somehow—but I think gently—that you weren't a tramp when you came to the door, and that I have a lot of—"

"Leave that, sugar-foots, to me," Jack said. "The first time I ever set eyes on her, I saw how becoming a diamond tiara would be to her. Let's start walking home, now. Your home-town people are staring at us."

"But what are we going to tell her?"

"Well, me, I'm going to tell her about an acre of ground I went and bought last year in San Francisco, from a friend temporarily down on his luck. We'll build a big grey stone house on it. My life will be complete when I see your mother cracking a bottle of champagne with the kind of people we belong with. Toppers and diamonds, Prue."

"Jack—you think she'll understand?"

"Sweetness," he said, "the mitts that held those 'forty-fours' could easily have been so silent with knitting-needles. Like hers. Do you really think your mother will object to me?"

Prudence said: "Let's first see, my dear, if she objects to *me*."

* * *

One of my chief regrets during my years in the theatre is that I couldn't sit in the audience and watch me.

JOHN BARRY

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GAUNTLET OF THE FALLS

In the pride of his strength, Sandarene was swimming to his heritage

by F. G. TURNBULL

IN the red and golden brilliance of an autumn evening, Sandarene the salmon ran the gauntlet of the seals, the fish-destroyers, that patrolled the estuary. From ocean depths to the Barron River gateway he came, sixty pounds of tireless energy that pulsed with life unborn, heading inland to the spawning redds among the hills.

As Sandarene hung idly in the slack water of high tide there rose to his conscious mind from the deeps of half-forgotten things a dim memory of peril encountered in the past, of dangers that beset him on other river journeys. Twice in days gone by he had begun the inland voyage to the high hill waters of his youth and each time he had failed to reach his destination.

On his first journey, three years before, he had been intercepted and mauled by a seal in the estuary, and had returned to the ocean to recover. Two years later, responding again to the call of the river, he eluded the seals and swam far upstream to the pool below the fall called White Hart's Leap. There, Roy McLintock, the smith, flayed him from shoulder to flank with a fish spear, and the Barron River bore him unresisting back to the sea once more.

Now, grown enormously, a mighty thing of intense vitality, confident and impetuous in the pride of his strength, he ignored the warning voice of the past. The redds, the far springhead, had beckoned, summoning him once again to attempt the perilous journey and play his part in the perpetuation of his race.

Even now he was late. Already most of the Barron River salmon were far upstream, and the flood that had enabled them to overcome all obstacles was falling rapidly. There was no time to loiter, nor must any barrier obstruct his progress, if he would claim a mate from among the shining horde of his kin.

When dusk fell over the sea and the first stars were alight, the ebb tide moved and the flow of the river could be felt. A thrill of excitement surged through Sandarene; his huge bulk quivered at the caress of the current. Exultantly he leapt aloft, falling back with a resounding splash.

Gulls rose from the surface in alarm. Their cries, distance-

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softened, fell on ears attuned to every sound that is known on waterways: and Lyeesha, the otter, wandering fisher, looked up from the flounder that flapped beneath his paws on the shore. He gazed intently over the water where the seabirds cried. Again Sandarene leapt and plunged. The dark eyes of the otter blazed. Here was a worthy quarry—a belated salmon, a mighty fish, running the Barron River.

Lyeesha left the flounder untouched and trotted on short, powerful legs to the water. He paddled into the incoming waves, and with only the tip of his snout awash he went out into the estuary.

As the tide receded, the river current ran faster. For some moments the big salmon mouthed the fresh water ecstatically. Then, turning his head to the stream, and with rhythmic thrusts of his broad-bladed tail, Sandarene began again the journey to the far-away glen where the Barron River was born. A little way behind, passing easily on an undulating course between surface and river bed, came Lyeesha, on the trail of the migrant fish.

Three days later, and many miles up-river, Roy McLintock, the smith, a lank and taciturn man, was busy in his forge on the waterside road, when a farmer waiting in the doorway remarked:

"The keeper tells me he saw an otter in the river this mornin'. It was huntin' a salmon, a great brute aboot seeventy pun'—an awfu' size o' a fish."

There was an almost imperceptible pause in the steady beat of the hammer on the anvil, and a gleam of intense interest flickered in the eyes of the smith. For years he had poached salmon in the Barron River, but so cunningly that suspicion had never fallen on him. Moreover, he knew the fish that the farmer mentioned—the fish whose name was Sandarene.

Quickly suppressing the violent emotion the remark had aroused in him, McLintock merely commented briefly on the destructiveness of otters and showed no further interest in the matter. However, a little later, when the farmer had gone, the smith closed the door of the forge, took something from a cupboard shelf and held it out to the light of a window. It was a leister—a fish spear, designed for throwing, and just recently completed.

Weeks of thought and incredible ingenuity had been expended in its creation. The slender shaft, two feet in length, built of cane segments bound at every inch, and with a hand-grip of doeskin, was a miracle of flexible strength. The twin-fluked head that tipped the shaft was a superb example of artistry in steel, hand-wrought from a bayonet-point; while neatly coiled and fastened to the other end of the shaft was a six-fathom handline with a wrist-strap.

For a long time the man gazed in fascination at the lethal thing, and his mind roved back to an autumn night, now one year ago,

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when the mightiest salmon that ever ran the Barron River leapt three times at White Hart's Leap. Three times the smith had thrown his old unwieldy spear, and twice he had missed his mark. At the third throw he had flayed the fish from shoulder to flank, but had failed to hold him.

Long had he awaited the return of Sandarene. Now at last he had come. The river was falling to normal, and White Hart's Leap would hold him back. They would meet again; and at their next encounter—here the man's grip tightened on the new and deadly spear—the king of salmon would die.

It was night, a blue and silver night, on the Barron River. A full moon lit a range of hills, a forest of spruce, and a winding waterway.

Out in the river a salmon leapt, casting wide a shower of drops which sparkled like rain that is lit by lightning; and Sandarene slid into the wide basin below White Hart's Leap, there to rest awhile before moving on to the fall that drummed its thunder in the night. On a rock at the end of the pool, Lyeesha appeared. Drops of water ran like beads of glass down his sweeping whiskers while he gazed at the swirl that marked the spot where Sandarene had leapt.

For three days and three nights the otter had followed the giant salmon, losing him repeatedly, yet always finding him again. From deeps to shallows, from still backwaters to foaming rapids, he had pursued, striving vainly to swim his quarry down. But now, with the fall ahead, which no salmon had ever been known to leap till high water came, Lyeesha realized with a thrill of triumph that the end of the chase was at hand. There was an oily gurgle, two little green lamps went out, and the otter was gone.

From the trees on the bank the shadowy figure of a man appeared, to clamber stealthily up among the rocks that shouldered each other round White Hart's Leap. On the brink of a gaping chasm he lowered himself into a niche facing the fall. Here he put his hand inside his jacket, then withdrew it, and there was a glint of moonlight on steel. McLintock, the smith, had come to his fishing.

About him the scene was one of terrible splendour. The river became narrow and swift between converging walls of rock at the Leap. Closer and closer it was hemmed, chafing and foaming until, abruptly and with a thunderous bellow, it poured over the sill of the fall and plunged into a seething pot-hole below. From the pot-hole the current hurled itself into a tortuous gut of immense depth, foaming and belching gusts of bubbles as it raced down the winding channel, then spread out and swayed to rest in the calm of a pool beyond.

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Down in the black depths of the pool, Lyeesha's sinuous form weaved among the skeletons of sunken trees, round rock fangs, and into seemingly bottomless pits. Here he discovered Sandarene again. The salmon sped away ahead of the otter and bored into the congested current at the head of the pool. Lyeesha swam fast in pursuit, but was baulked when the fish threaded his way through the splintered boughs of an ancient pine immovably wedged deep down in the gut.

Familiar with the arduous route ahead, the otter surfaced for air. A quick inbreath he took, then, curling forward, he swept away again to the depths in a smoothly falling curve. Beyond the sunken pine, Sandarene swam slowly through dim caverns and passages at the bottom of the gut, avoiding the overwhelming rush of the current. Behind him, paddling blindly, feeling his way along the walls, came Lyeesha.

Aloft on the rocks, like a falcon that awaits his prey on a lofty mountain turret, Roy McLintock crouched patiently. Cross-legged he sat, with his hands clutching his ankles. Spray glazed his clothes, but the man heeded neither the water nor the chill of the night.

Suddenly Sandarene leapt. Like the burnished curve of a crescent moon, his gleaming bulk rose in all its splendour from the thundering cauldron. It was a tentative leap that he made, as though to gauge the height of the fall. For a tiny moment of time he seemed to hang suspended in the billowing spray, high above the water, then with a mighty plunge he vanished.

The smith uncoiled from his crouch like a startled cat. Slowly, almost caressingly, as though anticipation were ecstasy, he lifted the elegant leister, its polished barbs glittering in the moonlight. Then, swiftly, he fastened the wrist-strap, lest the peerless weapon be lost, and looped the coiled handline over the crook of his elbow. Edging forward, he settled on one knee, his free hand gripping the edge of the spray-soaked rock that fell away to the gut. And with lips compressed and his gaze intent on the boiling pool, McLintock raised the leister and poised its deadly length at the level of his eyes.

Twenty feet below the surface, in a cavern where light was never known, Sandarene prepared again to leap at the fall. Behind him, unseen in the blackness and with every nerve and sinew alert for swiftest movement, the otter came through a tunnel in the rock, his webbed paws beating slowly as he quested blindly forward. Unexpectedly his snout butted against the broad flank of the salmon, and his jaws gaped wide to bite. But the tail of the fish gave a powerful swirl, and Lyeesha's fangs clashed shut on water.

Next instant a huge scale-clad projectile burst up through

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the welter of foam in the pot-hole and hurled itself aloft in a tremendous leap in the air. Just under the sill of the fall Sandarene hung for a moment, a wondrous thing in gleaming silver mail. The smith's lithe figure swayed; his arm moved with the speed of a striking snake, back, then forward. A twinkling meteor leapt from the outflung hand and cut the billowing gusts of spray with a thread of light. The cast was perfect. Amid the roar of the fall there sounded a sharp exclamation of triumph that the man could not suppress, as steel and silver met.

Sandarene turned over on his back, tail curved to head in agony, and crashed into the maelstrom with the flukes of the spear driven deep into the curve of his back. Lyeesha met him a foot below the surface. Sandarene swerved into the racing water of the gut. The otter's back arched, all four paws struck down and backward, and his streamlined form cut the water like a knife. Down he went into the boiling channel, five, fifteen, thirty feet, and clenched his white fangs savagely above the tail of the stricken fish. Interlocked, salmon and otter swept away in the racing torrent.

Aloft on the rock, McLintock was on his feet, ready, if need be, to scramble from his niche when the handline was run out. He braced himself to take the expected strain, but the tremendous pull of river and salmon and otter together was far beyond his expectation. The shock was terrific. The taut line pulled McLintock to his knees. He reached down to save himself, but only one hand clutched the slippery rock; the other was drawn beyond by the line on his wrist. One supporting hand was useless. Clawing frantically, the man toppled forward over the edge and with a shout of terror went down to the thundering river.

The strain on the line while the man was falling wrenched the spear from its hold in the fish. One keen barb hooked into the shoulder of the otter and ran up the side of his neck, shearing through sinew, artery and skin. Terrified, the otter released the salmon and struck wildly up to the surface, while Sandarene, for the moment at the mercy of the current, drifted away and was borne to the pool below.

Behind him the thrashing form of the man came down the gut, flung from wall to wall like a cork. He stared wildly about, looking for a projection to seize. Then, abruptly, his progress was stayed. Like a hooked fish he swung where the gut opened out to the basin, with one hand splashing on the surface while the other pointed towards the river bed, held there by the handline that ran from his wrist to the spear entangled in the boughs of the sunken pine.

The smith sought desperately to unfasten the wrist-strap, but the line was held too taut and, in the struggle, water broke almost

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continuously over his face. Panic-stricken, he shouted, his voice shrill with fear: "Help! Help!"

As though by magic a man rose at once from the sallows bordering the pool, where he had been crouched in hiding, with a gun, awaiting the appearance of the otter. He scrambled up the rocks overlooking the Leap, and the smith, despite his extremity, cursed bitterly as he recognized the keeper. But he shouted again, a gurgled broken cry: "I'm stuck—I'm stuck on the end o' a line."

The keeper stared for a moment in blank astonishment, then bawled: "I'll get a rope," and hurried away back over the rocks, muttering as he went: "Yon's McLintock. Been spearing fish. McLintock! The cunnin' deevil!"

Passing the tail of the pool, the keeper saw an unfamiliar object washing slowly in towards the bank. He paused for a moment to retrieve it with the toe of his boot, and from the water he drew the dead and bloodless body of the otter, Lyeesha. He chuckled grimly. "I'm havin' a grand nicht o' it!" he said.

Later in the night, Sandarene stirred again in the pool. The hurt of his injury had eased, while the urge to travel, temporarily lulled, had reawakened. And the call of the redds is imperative: deep must be the wounds of the fish that fails to respond.

Sandarene waved his tail, passed again through the water-filled caverns of the gut, and came once more to the inferno of the fall. From the uttermost depths of the pot-hole he rose, with every ounce of his enormous strength propelling him. Up through the surface he burst, leaping aloft through a veil of silver spray. With nearly a foot to spare he curved over the sill of the fall and splashed in a gust of moonlit drops into the smoother flow beyond.

And with the barrier of White Hart's Leap behind him, and the greatest peril of his migration past, Sandarene, king of the Barron River salmon, swam on to his heritage where the springhead called in the hills.

* * *

ADDRESS NOT KNOWN

In this churchyard lies Eppie Coutts,
Either here or hereabouts;
But whaur she is there's nane can tell,
Till Eppie rise and tell hersell.

Epitaph quoted by NEIL MCCALLUM
in *It's an Old Scottish Custom*

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THE WOMAN IN THE CASE

Here was the one witness whom everyone could believe . . .

by LAURENCE KIRK

ALTHOUGH his client was facing a charge of murder and in spite of Stephen Mitchell's reputation as a cross-examiner Sir Humphrey Woolpack sat quite placidly with his legs crossed as Vivien Bell was questioned.

The case was a stabbing affair and the people concerned in it were all fairly dubious. Sir Humphrey did not believe any of them : not even Roy Gilbert, the glib long-haired young man who was his client in the dock. But if Roy had been with Vivien from nine-thirty to ten that night he could not have murdered a man five miles away during the same period. It was as simple as that : an alibi.

The fortunate thing from his point of view was that the one witness on whom everything hinged was the one witness whom everyone could believe, whom even the brilliant young Stephen Mitchell would not be able to shake. Sir Humphrey looked admiringly at Vivien's pretty face and figure as she stood up confidently in the witness-box ; he recrossed his legs more comfortably and leaned back. The case really was in the bag.

Sir Humphrey knew Stephen Mitchell's technique. There was nothing forceful or fretful in his manner and no bullying in his method. He approached a trollop as though she were a dowager and a bookie as though he were a distinguished statesman. He cooed and crooned and agreed with them. It was not till he had got them eating out of his hand that he quietly removed their false teeth and held them up for the jury to see. But Vivien's teeth weren't false, either figuratively or actually. Sir Humphrey was quite confident about that, and he leaned still farther back as Stephen went over all the old stuff which he himself had brought out in his examination-in-chief.

Vivien worked three evenings a week at a Welfare Centre on the outskirts of Holborn. She used to get away soon after nine and if it was a fine evening, instead of taking a bus, she would walk the two miles back to her modest lodgings. It had been fine

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that June evening and she had taken her usual route through an old cemetery behind the Foundling Hospital.

Sir Humphrey had paid a visit to that cemetery—and no doubt Stephen Mitchell had also—to get the surroundings fixed in his mind and to identify the exact seat where Vivien had sat with Roy Gilbert. For a cemetery, it was a very charming place, with lilacs and planes and lime trees. Nobody had been buried there for a hundred and fifty years, and most of the old grey tombstones had been taken up and ranged round the outer wall, leaving only a few of the grander ones, like ancient temples, among the well-kept flower beds.

There were seats there at intervals, too; and a few old people used to creep out from the slums around and sit dozing in the sun. It was not surprising that Vivien herself should sit down there on a fine, still, June evening, and equally, it was not in the least surprising that when she saw Roy Gilbert walk past she should call his name. He was a Holborn man and Vivien had known him well in the days when he attended the Welfare Centre. What was more natural than that he should sit down beside Vivien on the same seat and talk to her for half an hour about old times? And finally, what could be more natural than that the pleasant chime of the church clock nearby should announce the half-hour and the three-quarter and finally ten o'clock?

All this, piece by piece, had been most carefully pinned together by Sir Humphrey Woolpack. And now Stephen Mitchell was trying to unpin it.

"To go back to the question of the hour, Miss Bell, you say you heard the half-hour, the three-quarter, and then the hour strike?"

"That is correct."

"And when the hour had finished striking, you got up and continued your walk home?"

"That is so."

"Was the accused with you then?"

"No, I have already said that he left me—to go in the opposite direction—before the clock struck the hour."

"But after it had struck the three-quarter?"

"Oh, a long time after that. It was only a minute or two before the hour struck that he went."

"Did you check that on your watch? You couldn't see the face of the clock."

"I didn't check it. But I am certain that the accused was with me until within three minutes of the hour."

"All right, Miss Bell, I think we have got the time fixed. I am not suggesting that your memory has played you false over that."

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Sir Humphrey recrossed his legs. What did that last sentence mean, he wondered? Was there a veiled threat in it or was it just one of Stephen's little tricks? Anyway he wasn't getting anywhere. It wasn't a question of lopping off a minute or two at one end or the other. If Roy Gilbert had been there in the cemetery at all, he had an alibi. Sir Humphrey leaned back again with a contented, placid expression on his face, but he was listening very intently as Stephen switched to a different line of attack.

"Now I think you have stated that there were some half dozen people in the cemetery at that time?"

"That is the number I saw. There may have been more."

"And of that half dozen there were two that you knew by sight?"

"Yes, old people. I had seen them before on the same seats."

"Anyway they have identified you as the lady who passed at that time?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think it odd that they haven't also identified the accused?"

"No, I don't think so. The only reason why I noticed them or they noticed me was that we had seen each other there before."

"Do you know they had never seen the accused before?"

"I don't know that at all. In any case they couldn't see the seat where he and I were sitting."

"Did you have a feeling that there were other people about besides the ones you saw?"

"I—I—I don't quite know what you mean."

"Isn't there a tomb just behind the seat where you were?"

"Why, yes."

"The tomb of Anna, daughter of Richard Cromwell, who died in 1727?"

"Yes."

"And another one in front: of Martha Moore who died in childbirth the same year?"

"Yes."

"Didn't you feel that Anna and Martha were near you?"

"Why, yes. I have thought about them, sitting there."

"And seen them, too, perhaps?"

Sir Humphrey noticed the sudden change in Vivien Bell's expression. She was distressed now, uncertain of herself. He jumped quickly to his feet.

"My lord, I protest! My learned friend . . ."

The judge silenced him with a forefinger.

"What exactly are you leading up to, Mr. Mitchell?" he demanded quietly.

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"I am leading up to this," Stephen Mitchell answered at once. "That the witness is a very imaginative young woman, so imaginative indeed that her evidence cannot be relied upon. That cemetery is a strange place, my lord. I myself when sitting there . . ."

The judge looked at him severely over his spectacles.

"Your sensations in that cemetery, Mr. Mitchell," he announced tartly, "are totally irrelevant. And you should be aware of that. On the other hand the sensations of the witness do have an important bearing on the case. You may proceed with your cross-examination."

Sir Humphrey sat down heavily. Vivien Bell was looking pale and wetted her lips with her tongue. He didn't like the look of her at all; and now, as Stephen Mitchell proceeded, he sat leaning forward intently.

"Isn't it correct, Miss Bell, that Anna is a slim pale girl with corn-coloured hair?"

Vivien Bell looked more distressed than ever.

"No, no, no," she answered.

"Very well then, it was Martha Moore who had the corn-coloured hair?"

"No, she has dark hair."

"Then it *was* Anna who had the corn-coloured hair?"

"Yes, corn-coloured and an embroidered dress."

Sir Humphrey was on his feet again: he was livid now. But the judge waved him back and he just glanced helplessly at his junior and sat in a heap. The court remained breathless as Stephen Mitchell went on.

"You've actually seen Anna there in her embroidered dress?"

"Yes."

"And Martha, too?"

"Yes, yes."

"You saw them there that evening?"

"Yes, I did."

"Miss Bell, you are on your oath. Do you still swear that the accused was with you from nine-thirty to ten that evening?"

Vivien Bell crumpled up with a sob.

"I don't know, I don't know," she cried. "I don't know which world I am living in."

Stephen Mitchell sat down wiping the sweat off his forehead and a sudden gust of wind seemed to blow through the stuffy court. Sir Humphrey was on his feet again, protesting, suggesting, submitting; but to the jury Vivien Bell was no longer a credible witness. Argument followed argument. The judge summed up. But the case was already really over. When the jury retired it

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only took them forty minutes to return a verdict of Guilty. It was the greatest triumph of Stephen Mitchell's career.

Stephen's wife, Cecily, protested loudly when he rang up to say that he could not get home for dinner that night. She had read about his triumph in the evening paper and had already asked some important friends round for coffee and liqueurs to celebrate his success. Cecily did not let the grass grow under her feet when it came to the advancement of Stephen's career or her own.

Stephen, however, was unusually obstinate and Cecily quickly substituted a cocktail party for a few days ahead. He slipped away from the court as soon as sentence had been passed, avoiding both congratulations and interviews. Then instead of returning to his chambers, as he had at first intended, he did a rather odd thing. He walked straight to the cemetery behind the Foundling Hospital and sat down on the seat where Vivien had sat surrounded by the graves and tombstones.

It was September then and the clock struck seven as he walked up the winding path. It was, however, a moment before twilight and there were one or two huddled figures on the seats enjoying the last slanting rays of the September sun.

The seat he wanted was unoccupied, but he did not sit down at once. He went and stood in front of the mellow grey stonework that preserved the memory of Anna and of Martha Moore. When he did sit down he half expected that Anna would appear before him in her embroidered dress. He wanted to see how tall she was and what the embroidery was like. But Anna shunned him; and when the sun went down a few minutes later it was cold in that deserted corner.

He did, however, notice two things that added to the disquiet in his mind. First, none of the seats was visible from where he was sitting. And second, when he came away a little later none of the huddled figures even looked at him. They were too engrossed in their own thoughts to notice that he was there.

Stephen still did not want to meet anyone he knew, and instead of going to his club he dined alone at a little restaurant in Percy Street, and then went to a cinema by himself. It was a very bad film; but though he was sensitive to bad films he did not care. He knew by then that what he was really trying to do was to waste so much time that Cecily would have gone to bed by the time he got home.

However, Cecily was wide awake when he reached the house at a quarter to twelve. She came running to the door.

"Darling! How frightfully late you are . . . You mustn't work as late as this."

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Stephen murmured something about having a lot to clear up, and she went on gaily.

" Well, never mind, you're home at last. And your whisky's waiting for you. And, my dear, what a triumph! It's all in the evening paper. You were absolutely brilliant. There's nothing can stop you now."

Stephen poured himself a drink and sat down.

" I'm sorry about those people you asked in. I just couldn't make it."

" Doesn't matter at all, darling." Cecily was in her most understanding mood. " I've asked them all for cocktails on Thursday instead—and a lot more. The Morrisons, the Fergusons, Sir George, Lord Amberdale. All the really big stuff."

Stephen looked up rather sharply.

" Darling, really! You shouldn't have done that without asking me."

" Nonsense, Stephen! " Cecily's reply was also a little sharp. " When you have a big success you want to ram it home immediately. You just don't know how lucky you are to have me to look after your career for you."

Stephen's only reply was to pour out a second drink. Cecily watched him for a moment and then went on in a different tone.

" Stephen, there isn't anything wrong, is there? "

" Yes, there is," Stephen answered abruptly. " And I suppose you might just as well know now as later."

" Well, what is it? "

" It's something pretty serious. I've been suspicious about it for a year now. Today I'm almost certain of it."

" But what—what is it? "

" I think I've got some strange power, Cecily: it may be a kind of hypnotic power. Anyway I'm afraid I have the power to make people break down in the witness-box and tell, not the truth, but lies to me."

" What a ridiculous idea, Stephen! "

Stephen now was walking up and down the room with his glass in his hand.

" I only wish it were! " he answered violently. " You remember the Stingy Hirsch case? Well, that all depended on the man Abrahams identifying Stingy. It was I who broke Abrahams down and made him identify Stingy. I had a feeling at the time that I could make him identify anyone if I wanted to. But actually he did identify Stingy, and Stingy got five years' penal servitude."

" My dear Stephen, you know as well as I do that the whole gang were as guilty as hell."

" They may have been in that case, I admit. But that doesn't

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make it any the less serious if I have the power to make witnesses commit perjury. Take the O'Donnell case next. O'Donnell had a perfectly good alibi, like Roy Gilbert today. I broke that alibi down and O'Donnell got a life sentence."

"Your trouble, my darling, is that you're so soft-hearted."

"I'm not in the least soft-hearted, Cecily, but I do care about the truth. I knew that young woman was speaking the truth today. Sir Humphrey knew it. Everybody knew it. And then I broke her down and made her tell lies. Deadly, fatal lies!"

"Stephen darling, don't tell me that you have fallen in love with the little welfare worker?"

"Of course not! Don't be absurd. But I am convinced that she was telling the truth when she said Roy Gilbert was with her that evening. It was I who confused her. Roy Gilbert's got a death sentence and Vivien Bell may be charged with perjury. It's the most awful situation for me that any man has ever been in."

Cecily got up somewhat wearily.

"You're tired, darling. We'll talk about it all another time. All I'll say now is that if you do anything to spoil the brilliant career you have in front of you, you'll do it over my dead body. That's all. Good night."

Stephen watched her sweep out of the room, then he poured himself a third drink.

He felt better the next morning and when Cecily brought the full force of her persuasive powers to make him promise not to tell anyone else what he had told her, he agreed for the time being. He knew he needed time to think it over and was already regretting that he had let Cecily into his secret before his mind was fully made up.

Cecily, for her part, was relying on the cocktail party to bring him to his senses, and she spared no effort to make it a success. Surely the glitter and the glow, the flattery and adulation of all these rich and important people, would be enough to make even Stephen understand which side his bread was buttered!

But the cocktail party did not have the effect that Cecily intended. Even while he was being toasted as a future Attorney-General, Stephen behind his cheerful smile was torturing himself again. Five years for one! A life sentence for another! Death for the third! It was monstrous, if what he feared was true. He was a menace to the world he was living in. If he went on, what further miscarriage of justice might there not be? And if he stopped, what was left of his career—or his marriage?

One thing the cocktail party did show him quite finally and

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indelibly was that it was his career that Cecily was in love with. She did not care what happened to justice so long as the Stephen Mitchells were successful and sought after and rich.

Stephen had a sleepless night: Cecily was useless to him, and he thought then of seeing his doctor. But he knew that his doctor was rich and successful like himself and would not understand. What would he prescribe? A holiday, fresh air and golf, of course. And during the holiday Roy Gilbert would be executed.

When the dawn came Stephen could see Cecily sleeping contentedly in the twin bed, but no help came to him with the new day. He thought then of approaching the Home Office or the Director of Public Prosecutions. But he could well imagine the official horror when he suggested that anything could go wrong with the vast machine they controlled . . . "But my dear fellow, everything is provided for. He can appeal. The Home Secretary can intervene. It isn't your fault if witnesses are unreliable and commit perjury. Not that they have, of course. You're imagining things, my dear fellow. Overworked! You ought to take a holiday. What about that little place in Wales you once went to? Sea air. Lovely walks. Good golf."

The more Stephen thought of it the more convinced he became that no established human agency could help him; and that evening he went back to the cemetery and sat down on the same seat. He had a strange feeling that it was Anna who had got him into this trouble and that only Anna could help him out. But Anna did not come forward that evening.

As he sat there Stephen went over each of the cases in turn in his mind. His was not the kind of eye to stop a lion in its path or bring sleep to a distracted mind; and yet with each of those three witnesses there had been a definite moment when he knew suddenly that he could get anything he wanted from them. Each time it had happened within a few seconds.

Having convinced himself at last that what he feared was true, Stephen racked his mind again about the practical aspect of it all. What could he do about each individual case?

In the first two he decided that the answer was nothing. He believed that both men were guilty even if their guilt had been falsely proved. Moreover Stingy Hirsch between verdict and sentence had asked for other offences to be taken into account: offences which alone were worth a five years' sentence. And O'Donnell, whether guilty or not, had killed another prisoner at Parkhurst and was already in Broadmoor. There was no question of letting him loose on the world again.

But it was different with Roy Gilbert. Stephen was in no way convinced of his guilt. Still less did he believe that Vivien Bell

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had told a single lie until he made her. Something therefore had to be done. At once. But what ?

Stephen was twisting and turning on the wooden seat just as he had in the twin bed earlier in the day, when suddenly he had a strange premonition of something about to happen. For a second he thought it was Anna who was coming out from her grey stone tomb to console him. But then he saw that it was Vivien Bell walking slowly up the path.

He jumped up at once.

" Miss Bell, please may I talk to you ? "

She looked him up and down for a moment before recognition came. Then she said rather bitterly,

" Haven't you already done enough talking, Mr. Mitchell ? "

" Too much, but not enough ! " Stephen nodded grimly. Then when he had made Vivien sit down beside him on the seat he went on quickly, " I just want to ask you one simple question, Miss Bell. Did you sit on this seat with Roy Gilbert on the evening he was charged with the murder ? "

" Of course I did," she said. " I told you so, and you didn't believe me."

" I believe you now," Stephen answered. " But I want to know this, too. What made you falter over it ? "

" I wish I knew," Vivien said wearily. " I just felt suddenly that I had been doped. That you knew everything anyway and it didn't matter what I thought or said. And of course I am imaginative. I had pictured Anna with the corn-coloured hair just as you described her. It did make me feel for the moment that I had imagined Roy Gilbert, too. But of course I hadn't. He was as real as you are, sitting there. And quite apart from the alibi he would never have killed a man. He was a wild foolish boy, but he couldn't bear the sight of blood. They thought I was lying about that, too, when I said so in court ! . . . They can't be going to hang him, Mr. Mitchell ? Surely they can't ? "

" They are if I don't do something," Stephen said violently. " And you might possibly be charged with perjury as well. The papers are already with the Director of Public Prosecutions."

Vivien paid no attention to this aspect of the case.

" I've done everything I can for Roy since then. But it's too late. They all just look at me as though I'd come out of an asylum."

Stephen put his hand over her arm sympathetically for a second.

" If only they would try you at once," he went on eagerly, " that would be the way out. I could appear in your defence and tell them that you're the third witness that I've hypnotized into saying what I wanted."

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"Hypnotized!" Vivien stared at him. "That was just what it felt like . . . You knew that this could happen?"

"I had suspected it, but I wasn't sure till afterwards."

"Well then, can we do this? To save Roy?"

Stephen turned away hopelessly.

"No, we can't," he muttered. "They'll never have the case ready in time even if they do bring it . . . But there must be another way! His appeal, perhaps. But then I've got to prove that I have this power and I don't know how I can do that."

Without thinking what he was doing Stephen had now risen from the seat and was striding along the path towards the entrance of the cemetery. Vivien hurried along at his side and shot a puzzled glance at him from time to time. She gave him her business and her home address, and her telephone number. Then as he lapsed into another bout of silent thought, she suddenly went on.

"This is going to be pretty serious for you, isn't it, Mr. Mitchell?"

"Serious?" He looked at her vaguely.

"I mean, can you go on being a barrister after this?"

"No, of course I can't. And I can't either, if they go and hang Roy Gilbert."

"Then it's the end for you?"

"That's it. The end . . . But don't worry about that, Miss Bell. The end of something is always the beginning of something else."

Vivien stopped and held out her hand.

"I turn to the right here," she said. "And I'm very grateful to you, Mr. Mitchell. I never knew that any man could be so good."

After another sleepless night Stephen decided that he would visit the Home Office first and then the Director of Public Prosecutions. But as it was he never got farther than the Home Office. He noticed the incredulous expression on Sir Gilbert Ware's face as he began his story and was not surprised when Sir Gilbert interrupted him and asked his secretary to bring him the Roy Gilbert papers.

While they were waiting for the papers Sir Gilbert gave him a cigarette; and then, just as Stephen had dreamed he would, turned to him in a most soothing manner.

"Why stay in London in this fine weather, Mitchell? Why not go off and take a holiday?"

Stephen was beginning again, slowly, wearily, hopelessly, to explain that he was in his right mind. But then the papers arrived and they were interrupted again.

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Sir Gilbert was now turning over the papers in the maddeningly methodical manner he had.

"While I find it impossible to place any credence on what you have been telling me," he began ponderously, "something has happened that makes it almost certain that the case will be reopened. Only three days ago a man was knocked down by a bus. He is in a critical condition and will probably die.

"He has however made a statement to the effect that he is guilty of the crime for which Roy Gilbert was convicted. Death-bed confessions, as you know, are accepted with some reserve; but he has brought two new names into the case and from the inquiries the police have already made it seems quite certain that he is speaking the truth and that Roy Gilbert will be reprieved and exonerated. Curious that you should have had this premonition about the case!"

Stephen could hardly believe his ears.

"You think it was only a premonition?" he demanded.

"Why yes, or shall we say—an intuitive doubt? The Director of Public Prosecutions, by the way, has already decided not to proceed in the case of Vivien Bell."

Stephen felt too confused at the moment to make any further comment, and Sir Gilbert rose to indicate that the interview was at an end.

"I should forget what you've just told me," he added. "You see, if it were once admitted that Counsel could hypnotize a witness into giving false evidence, it would bring all business in the courts to a standstill. Everybody would plead hypnotism and cite this case. You must see that it's impossible. Take a holiday, my dear Mitchell. You've earned it and you want to be perfectly fit when you start work again. I think you know the way out."

Stephen found the way out; but when he got on to the pavement he felt so dizzy that he had to hold on to a lamp-post for support. Everything in the garden now was lovely—if only he could persuade himself he was wrong.

The final scene was with Cecily. Stephen had said nothing during the last few days either about his actions or his thoughts. That afternoon when he got home early he told her all and watched her face very carefully as he did so. Cecily had never been very successful at masking her feelings. First came impatience when she discovered that his recent silence did not mean the matter was closed. The impatience, however, was quickly coated with a thin layer of loving understanding. That in turn cracked in several places as the depth of his sincerity became apparent. She was hard, then brittle: contemptuous when he spoke of Vivien Bell:

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and her persuasive comment dried up in a stinging silence.

It was not till he came to the interview at the Home Office that some real genuine interest came back into her expression. Finally, as he came to the end of his conversation with Sir Gilbert, she gave a sigh of relief and a short contented laugh.

"So it's all settled itself!" she said brightly. "What a storm in a tea-cup!"

Stephen looked at her as though she were a stranger.

"I'm afraid it isn't any storm in any tea-cup!"

"But of course it is, darling. And I must say you've been pretty lucky. Outside events have been kind enough to prevent you making an arrant fool of yourself."

"The outside events," Stephen retorted, "haven't altered the most important thing of all. And that is that I consider that it would be criminal for me ever to cross-examine again."

Cecily thumped a cushion with her hand and jumped up.

"You must be crazy, Stephen. You've got the whole world before you and you're proposing to throw it away for a whim."

Stephen was now as angry as she was.

"If you call a man's integrity a whim," he answered, "then you are perfectly right . . . In any case it doesn't matter much what you call it. As a barrister, I am retired."

"And what, may I ask, are you going to do?"

"That I don't know yet. Farming perhaps."

"And I suppose you'd expect me to milk the cows!"

"There are many other things besides farming, Cecily. A man who can make good at one profession can generally make good at another."

"I married a barrister," Cecily stabbed the words at him, "a very brilliant young barrister."

Stephen for a moment saw something in her point of view.

"I'm sorry, Cecily," he murmured. "I'm sorry. It's a wrench for me, too, you know, but it's got to be done."

Cecily became soft and pleading again.

"But it hasn't got to be done, Stephen. It's all a mistake."

"No, no, Cecily, it's settled. I'm very sorry. But it's settled."

"You mean you won't listen to reason?"

"Not what you call reason."

"Very well then, Stephen!"

She went to the telephone and dialled a number. He did not recognize the number but after a few remarks from Cecily he realised who it was she was speaking to. An acquaintance of theirs, a very rich man, who had a yacht and a pretty bad reputation. He listened without moving as the one-sided conversation went on:

"Miles dear . . . Is that invitation still on? . . . It is!

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Then can I come? Really? I won't be a nuisance . . . No, no, just me. Stephen can't get away. Too much work! . . . But it will be lovely, Miles, lovely! I must get myself some new dresses."

There was a good deal more; but by this time Stephen had lit a cigarette and was seeing strange visions through the smoke of it. The vision he saw was the verandah of a farmhouse with Bougainvillaea on it and vineyards stretching away in front: the sunlight was very bright so that it was probably in South Africa or some such region, and there was a woman beside him with corn-coloured hair and an embroidered dress who was holding his hand.

The vision was a little deceptive; for a year later when he really looked out on just such a scene in just such sunlight, it was wheat and not vines that he saw, and the woman who was holding his hand was Vivien, not Anna.

* * *

TINKER, TAILOR

"Each one to his own trade," as Florian so wisely remarked: count one mark for recognizing each of these industrious men and women, one for the source and one for the author, making twenty-seven in all. The answers are on page 100.

1. *Harbourer of spies and unabashed collaborator with the enemy, this ancient member of an ancient profession!*
2. *He was only little (and young and tender!) but he became the Captain of a Seventy-three . . .*
3. *He repeated his words rhythmically as though he had said them many times before. "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world . . . With us it ain't like that."*
4. *Shepherd, stonemason and cannibal, a slight irregularity of facial construction seemed no handicap to this versatile tradesman.*
5. *A haulier by hereditary trade, player of a treble fiddle (that cost thirty shillings, and good words besides), and—yes—in love.*
6. *"What's time?" said the scholar. "Leave Now for dogs and apes! Man has Forever." And fierce as a dragon he sucked at the flagon of learning . . .*
7. *Playboy, merchant and sailor, and rash—and certainly rueful—porter to an ungrateful old man.*
8. *A musician of obvious value to a nurseryman, and a handy companion in a storm at sea!*
9. *An apprentice in London town this esquire's son, and all for the love of a lady. Seemingly he had little memory for faces!*

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FLAVOUR OF SALT

A regular old sea-dog is Bill, always sleeps in his clothes and never washes

W. W. JACOBS, *Smoked Skipper*

" Know Lieutenant Bowling ! " said he ; " odds my life ! and that I do ; and a good seaman he is, as ever stepped upon forecastle —and a brave fellow as ever cracked biscuit ;—none of your guinea-pigs, nor your fresh-water, wishy-washy, fair-weather fowls. Many a taught gale of wind has honest Tom Bowling and I weathered together."

TOBIAS SMOLLETT, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*

Treasure Trove

" What bring you, sailor, home from the sea—
Coffers of gold and of ivory ? "

When first I went to sea as a lad
A new jack-knife was all I had :

And I've sailed for fifty years and three
To the coasts of gold and of ivory :

And now at the end of a lucky life,
Well, still I've got my old jack-knife.

WILFRID GIBSON

Stormalong

It seems now that the very next morning one of the after look-outs cried that a grampus was following us. The Old Man put his glass on it and said : " That ain't no grampus, but I can't say what it is. Put her about and we'll have a look."

About two hours later we could see that it was a man, coming along at an eighteen-knot clip, and we wondered how he ever got out there. Couldn't be a sailorman, because none of us ever learned to swim and this fellow could. The Old Man ordered a boat lowered, but before we could put it in the water the man had rounded our stern and reaching up grabbed the larboard gunnel and pulled himself on board. The Old Man was waiting for him.

" Where you from and what are you doing in the middle of the South Atlantic ? " he demanded.

The big fellow shook the water out of his hair and beard.

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" I was bosun on the *Queen's Dream* until midnight, sir," he said to the Old Man. " Last evening we passed you astern and as soon as I saw you I knew this was my ship. Sir, it took me until midnight to convince the captain I should have my release." He dug into his wet trousers and brought out a paper and some banknotes. " The captain gave me my discharge and due pay and then asked me what good they were, the big ship was out of sight. Well, sir, I took my bearings and left my shirt and shoes on deck, and here I be, sir."

The Old Man looked at the paper. " What are you able to do ? " he asked.

" Able to hand, reef and steer, sir," he said modestly in his quiet voice.

" Then take the wheel and hold her sou'-sou'-east by east, three points south." That was the way Stormalong joined the *Courser*. He went to the helm and that was the end of the yawing. He gentled her. It was there and then she got the name of a dream ship, but I can tell you it was ten per cent dream and ninety per cent Stormalong.

I made the Double Triangle with him, round Cape Stiff to Frisco and on to China, then to London and back to New York. In every port he drove the women crazy; just as soon as they saw him they forgot their errands. At New York Swivel Eye Sue came down to welcome me and my pay, but once she put her roving eye on Stormie she forgot me.

FRANK SHAY, *A Sailor's Treasury*

Hornpipe

I've a pal called Billy Peg-leg, with one leg a wood leg,
And Billy he's a ship's cook, and lives upon the sea ;
And, hanging by his griddle,
Old Billy keeps a fiddle,
For fiddling in the dog-watch, when the moon is on the sea.

Then it's fun to see them dancin', them bow-legged sailors dancin',
To the tune o' Peg-leg's fiddle, a-fiddlin' fast and free ;
It's fun to watch old Peg-leg,
A-waltzin' wi' his wood leg,
When bosun takes the fiddle, so Peg can dance with me.

We takes our luck wi' tough ships, wi' fast ships, wi' free ships,
We takes our luck wi' any ship to sign away to sea :
We takes our luck wi' the best o' them,
And sings our songs wi' the rest o' them,
When the bell strikes the dog-watch and the moon is on the sea.

BILL ADAMS

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Bristol Fashion

A sailor has a peculiar cut to his clothes, and a way of wearing them which a green hand can never get. The trousers, tight round the hips, and thence hanging long and loose round the feet, a superabundance of checked shirt, a low-crowned, well-varnished black hat, worn on the back of the head, with half a fathom of black ribbon hanging over the left eye, and a slip-tie to the black silk neckerchief, with sundry other minutiae, are signs, the want of which betrays the beginner at once. Besides the points in my dress which were out of the way, doubtless my complexion and hands were quite enough to distinguish me from the regular *salt*, who, with a sunburnt cheek, wide step, and rolling gait, swings his bronzed and toughened hands athwartships, half opened, as though just ready to grasp a rope.

RICHARD HENRY DANA, *Two Years Before The Mast*, 1840

Blow The Man Down!

And Neddy he swore by butt and bend, and Billy by bend and bitt,
And nautical names that no man frames but your amateur nautical wit;
And Sam said, "Shiver my topping-lifts and scuttle my foc's'le yarn,
And may I be curst, if I'm not in first with a kipperling slued astarn!"

SIR OWEN SEAMAN

Jack Of All Trades

A thorough sailor must understand much of other vocations. He must be a bit of an embroiderer, to work fanciful collars of hempen lace about the shrouds; he must be something of a weaver, to weave mats of rope-yarns for lashings to the boats; he must have a touch of millinery, so as to tie graceful bows and knots, such as *Matthew Walker's roses*, and *Turk's heads*; he must be a bit of a musician, in order to sing out at the halyards; he must be a sort of a jeweller, to set dead-eyes in the standard rigging; he must be a carpenter, to enable him to make a jury-mast out of a yard in case of emergency; he must be a sempstress, to darn and mend the sails; a ropemaker, to twist *marline* and *Spanish foxes*; a blacksmith, to make hooks and thimbles for the blocks: in short, he must be a sort of Jack of all trades, in order to be master of his own.

HERMAN MELVILLE, *Redburn*

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COURIER OF LOVE

"Learn that by heart," he said, "and then burn it"

by GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

IT was the nearest he had ever come to sending an agent to his death. Her death, rather. He admitted that he shouldn't have taken the risk, that a man with his experience of women should have known better; but there he was with the enemy order of battle—or ally's peaceful deployment, according to how you look at it—all along the southern fringe of the Iron Curtain from Bratislava to the Black Sea.

The list was complete, and accurate up to the previous Saturday; and there wasn't a chance of getting it out to the west. No handy secret wireless. No landing grounds. Not a trustworthy agent who had the remotest hope of being given a passport in time to be of use. Theotaki had found his job much easier when operating under the noses of the Gestapo.

He was a Roumanian of Greek origin, with all a Greek's hungry passion for the ideal freedom which had never in practical politics existed, and never could. He had also the Greek's love of adventurous intrigue for its own sake. One gets used to the trade, he would say. Steeple-jacks, for example. They couldn't be thinking all the time about risk. They took, he supposed, meticulous care with all their preparations—blocks and tackle, scaffolding, belts—and then got on with the job. It was only when a man had scamped the preliminaries that he need worry about risks.

Normally there was no need to scamp them, no disastrous demand for hurry. Cold war wasn't like hot war, and there weren't any impatient generals howling for immediate results. So caution, caution, caution, all the time. It was a bit dull, he said, but the main objective had to be to keep his organization alive.

He admitted, however, that this had been an occasion for desperate measures. The only chance he could see of getting that enemy order of battle into hands that would appreciate it was D 17. D 17 was going the very next day to Stockholm to be married. She would never have been allowed to leave for less neutral territory; but it was hard, even for communist bureaucrats, to think up a really valid excuse for preventing a citizen—an entirely useless citizen

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whose parents were living on the proceeds of their jewellery and furniture—from taking herself off to Sweden and matrimony, when a firm request for her had been passed through diplomatic channels.

Alexia, otherwise D 17, was a very minor agent: somewhat too enthusiastic, said Theotaki, for her sister had been mishandled by the Russian advance guards when they entered Bucharest and had died the following week. The unfortunate incident had had some effect on Theotaki's ideals of freedom, too. But he never confessed to emotion. To judge by his jowled, dead, decadent face, you wouldn't have thought him capable of feeling any.

Since he had moved before the war in the social circle of the parents and their two daughters, he knew Alexia very well. She had, of course, no idea that he was in any way responsible for the occasional orders received by D 17. She couldn't have given away more than the three names of the other members of her cell—at least she couldn't up to the time when Theotaki was forced into gambling against his better judgment.

He kept her under observation all the morning. She was shopping for a few clothes and necessary trifles that she could much better have bought abroad. But she didn't know that. Alexia visualized the outside world as seething with unemployment and economic distress. Of course she did, of course she did, argued Theotaki, defending this absurd shopping. Even when you are aware that all your news is tainted, you have to believe some of it. For all Alexia knew, the shops of Stockholm might well have been looted by starving rioters or bought out by dollar-waving American troops.

She was obviously happy. Well, why shouldn't she be? She was a tense and lovely woman in her middle twenties escaping to her lover and doing a bit of buying to please his eyes. When, however, she sat down, alone, in the huge barren hall of a cheap café, she was ashamed of herself.

Theotaki guessed it from her bearing, from the uncertainty of her eyes. He was clever as any woman at guessing mood when not a word had passed. To be ashamed of yourself for being happy was, he explained, one of the most damnable, minor, nagging aches of political tyranny. Your personal tastes and joys could not be altered by the common discontent, yet you felt they should be. Love and the flighting of duck at first light and the relish of wine to a man and the feel of dress to a woman—they don't come to an end because your country is enslaved and terrorized.

So that was the position—D 17 sitting in a café, thinking of her

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beloved with one half of her mind, and with the other of her duty to hate; and Theotaki moving behind her to find a table, not too far away, where she couldn't see and greet him.

He took one of the café's illustrated papers in its cane frame, and began abstractedly to write a poem across the blank spaces of an advertisement. When he had finished his drink and his casual scribbling, he paid his bill and sent the waiter to Alexia with the paper. He then vanished from his table and stood talking to a casual acquaintance by the door, whence he could watch in a mirror the effect of his inspiration.

The waiter suspected nothing. It was a quite normal act to send a paper to a customer who had asked for it—especially if the customer were a pretty girl. At least it appeared quite normal when Theotaki did it. That he was alive at all was largely due to his naturalness of manner.

Alexia received the paper as if it were expected. Theotaki approved her presence of mind, and well he might. Any gesture of surprise could have led—if the waiter earned a little extra money by giving information to the police—to prolonged questioning of both of them. He admitted that he had been apprehensive. He hadn't been able to arrange much training for her and her like.

She glanced idly through the few pictures of factory openings and parades, and found the doodling of some previous reader. There were girls' heads, and jottings for a very commonplace love poem to sweet seventeen. Among the half lines, the blanks to be filled in, the notes for promising rhymes, was a phrase *your garden at three in the morning* continually repeated, toyed with and crossed out because no order of the words could be made to scan. Then came a row of capital Ds, as if the lovesick doodler, failing to succeed as a poet, had tried to design the most decorative letter with which to begin his work.

D 17's garden at 3 a.m.—the message would have been instantly clear to Theotaki who never read anything that was misplaced, even a printer's error, without wondering why it was misplaced. But he didn't expect the same alertness from D 17; he only hoped. As a man of imagination he had, he insisted, the keenest sympathy for romance, and therefore thought it more than likely that Alexia would be too absorbed by justifiable dreams to notice his vulgar scribbling.

He was very pleased with her indeed when her hand began to fiddle with the ash-tray, saucer and salt-cellar, arranging them into a group of three to show, if there were anyone watching her, that she had read and understood.

D 17's garden—or rather her parents'—was a reasonably safe spot for a *rendez-vous*. A high but climbable wall separated its

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overgrown shrubbery from the state-disciplined bushes of a public park. In happier days, Alexia and her sister had been very well aware of its advantages.

High-spirited young ladies, said Theotaki. Yes, and they had had their own uproarious methods of discouraging unwelcome suitors. When he dropped over the wall that night, for the second time in his life, he remembered that ten years earlier there had been a cunning arrangement of glass and empty cans to receive him, and a crash that woke the uneasy summer sleepers in four blocks of flats that faced the park.

This time there were only silence and soft leaf-mould. Theotaki in a whisper reminded the darkness of his last visit and of the two excitable policemen who had burst with Alexia's father into the garden. Even in those days he had been skilled at evading policemen.

The darkness did not answer. Very rightly. This might be a trap. D 17 had not received her orders through the usual channels.

Theotaki sat down with his back against the wall and waited. After a while he again addressed the dark shapes of the bushes. He warned them that if they were not alone they had better say so, for he was about to speak of the relationship—the 1952 relationship, that is—between himself and Alexia.

Alexia detached herself from her background, and assured him that she was alone. As proof of his authority, he told her the names and numbers of the other members of her cell and what their recent activities had been.

"Will that do?" he asked. "Or do you want more details, D 17?"

She murmured that she couldn't know . . . that she would never have believed it possible . . . that never in all her life had she respected him—or anyone—so much . . .

Theotaki apologized for being desperate. Caution—caution, he told her, was the only road to success. There was no hurry, no room for either risks or enthusiasm. Still, sometimes—regretfully—one had to improvise. Where was it safe to talk?

She led him away from the wall into a tunnel of green darkness, and begged him to say what he wanted from her. Always that dangerous feminine enthusiasm. Yet it was a little forced. Theotaki could tell by her voice that she was uneasy at the unexpected mixture of her social life—such as it was—with her very secret service.

He apologized again for his inefficiency, for the urgency—there should never be any urgency—which had compelled him to appeal to her directly.

"It isn't fair to any of us," he said.

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"Whatever happens to me, I shall not talk," Alexia assured him in a passionate whisper.

Theotaki considered the eager, small-boned body with the pitying eye of a professional. It would be capable of exquisite suffering, but he was inclined to share Alexia's faith in its resistance. Torture had little effect upon a flame. Better technique was to confine it closely and have patience until it went out. He reckoned that about three months would be enough to draw out full confession from an Alexia who by then would be Alexia no longer.

Three months. Or much less, if she were caught without possibility of blank denials. Good God, when he thought, afterwards, how nearly it had happened, how but for the most amazing luck . . .

"You are in love?" he asked.

"Doesn't it stand to reason?"

Theotaki quickly answered that he hadn't doubted it for a moment. Nor had he. She wasn't the type of woman to marry, just to escape from the country, without love. No, he wanted to know what she would answer—to hear, as it were, the worst from her own lips.

He remembered the man who taught him his trade. He liked to remember him very carefully, for, since the man was dead, there was no other method of consultation. This teacher of his used to say that a female agent was every bit as good as any male. What she lacked in attack, she made up in human understanding. But never, the dead man had insisted, *never* choose a woman in love!

Something of this, by way of warning, he repeated to D 17.

"I think your friend did not understand women," she answered.

Theotaki explained that his friend had been talking only of women of character, who worked for patriotism not money. He had not implied that such a woman's devotion would be any less because she was in love, nor that she would be likely to sacrifice the cause to her private happiness. No, he had only meant that any woman of outstanding sensitivity was, when in love, Love Itself. She became possessed by hormones and happiness, and ceased to bother with details.

"And I wouldn't choose any woman but a woman in love," Alexia laughed. "Because until she is, she's only half alive."

Theotaki admitted it was true, at any rate, that her will dominated her environment. Yes, there was something in that. The spirit of a woman in love could burn its way through armour-plate.

"But don't forget my friend's experience," he warned her. "He was a man of very wide experience. And so be a little more

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careful over details than you would be ordinarily. Just to compensate."

He gave her the precious sheet of foolscap, closely typed over with the positions, the strengths, the armour of corps, divisions and independent brigades.

"Learn that by heart," he said, "and then burn it. Burn it and crush the ashes. When you get to Stockholm, make an excuse, as soon as you reasonably can, to be alone, and go straight to the address you will read at the bottom of the sheet. Say you come from me, and recite your lesson. That's all. Then you can be happy with a good conscience. I, your leader, tell you so."

When she had vanished silently into the house, Theotaki flowed, inch by careful inch, like the battered tom-cat he resembled, back over the wall. He walked from the park to his flat through streets deserted by all but the police. Several times during the journey he showed his papers. He was a privileged person, kept rather contemptuously by the Ministry of the Interior for the sake of his general usefulness. Nobody could possibly have suspected Theotaki of any idealism.

D 17—well, what D 17 did when she was alone in her bedroom could only be reconstructed from his knowledge of her and the story that reached him weeks later.

She had a quick, reliable memory, and in the grey hour before dawn she learned those dull military numerals as conscientiously as she had learned poetry for school examinations. She would remember, said Theotaki—who had practised, earlier in his career, the same exact and desperate memorizing—every fact and figure for the rest of her life. That done, she would have been relaxed and beautifully at ease. The last service had been asked of her; she had an honourable discharge. She could give her whole attention to dreaming of the joy that would begin next day.

She must have sat down about sunrise, in the last of her spare time, too excited to sleep, to write to her fiancé. That was like her. She was rich in forethought and expedients. Her departure might still be delayed by some incalculable change in the official mind. If it were, her lover would have a letter to comfort him. If it were not, they would read the two pages together, and laugh for relief from their common fears which had not come true.

Then, when the letter was in its envelope and stamped, came all the fuss of leaving: the weeping mother, the insistence that she should have enough breakfast, the last-minute closing of her four suit-cases, the drive to the station.

At the frontier, Theotaki took up direct observation again, for, if D 17 should walk into trouble, he wanted to have first news of it.

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He was astonished at the ease, the gallantry of her departure. The Roumanian officials searched two of her cases and left the rest unopened. It was the starry-eyedness of her, and her youth, and her own infectious certainty that no one could stop so innocently blissful a girl, which carried her through. A perfect example, Theotaki pointed out, of the woman in love dominating her environment. That grim frontier post, on both sides of the line, was all bows and smiles.

Theotaki could go no farther. That he had been allowed to come so far, and on the flimsiest of excuses, was a severe test of his nuisance value to his Ministry. He hastened back to Bucharest, very relieved but unable to get rid of an aching nervousness. He put it down to his dislike of breaking the rules of the trade. By short-circuiting his own organization, he had hopelessly committed its safety to the hands of D 17.

He assured himself that she could have no further difficulties, but she had still to cross a frontier between Budapest and Prague; and at Prague, before she took the plane to Stockholm, there would be a last, thorough and envious examination of her papers and her baggage.

Theotaki spoke of Alexia's journey as if he had been on the train with her. In thought, hour after hour, so he was. He knew to the minute—though that of course was mere calculation of schedules—when the blinds of the train would be pulled down so that no passenger might see the possible presence and activities of troops. 136th Assault Division, she would say to herself, and inevitably her mind would run over the bare details of its strength and its experimental bridging equipment. She wouldn't be able to help this silent recitation, and would try to stop herself forming the mental words lest they might be magically overheard.

All that was true enough. Nevertheless Alexia, as he heard afterwards, had passed most of the journey in a dream of romantic confidence. It had been broken, while she sat in the train, by moments of vague inexplicable worry; but whenever she and her baggage were in contact with the enemy, she treated officials as if they were as gay and carefree as she herself, in twelve hours more, hoped to be.

She turned the future into the present with an audacity that no mere man could have imitated and which she didn't even recognize as unreal—with the result that when police and customs and their informers on the train gave her a look, they saw only a girl neither immorally rich nor suspiciously poor, and much too happy to have anything in their line of business upon her conscience.

At Prague, however, the solid and bad-tempered Czechs turned

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her inside out. They flung the upper layers of her bags aside and angrily rummaged the bottom for anti-social contraband. They interrogated her. They gave her a fresh batch of forms to sign. And when they had punished her as much as they could for wanting to leave the Russian orbit at all, they had to allow her to leave it.

After that it was all plain sailing. She was met by her fiancé on arrival, and Swedish smiles passed her straight into their country, and let her loose in a blue and white Stockholm which sparkled like her mood. No, not sentimentalists, Theotaki explained. They had merely carried out their investigation of Alexia at the proper time, and once her visa had been issued there was no further point in annoying her. That was the mark of a civilized country.

It must have been very difficult for D 17 to shake off fiancé and future parents-in-law and the odd score of hospitable friends who were determined to cherish her; but she did it. She had, after all, long experience in concealing her intentions. Somehow she established her right to a moment of privacy, and claimed it.

She delivered her message, word-perfect, and kept the taxi waiting and was back in her bedroom in half an hour.

Then she started, said Theotaki, to unpack. He heard of that unpacking when he met his Stockholm correspondent in the quiet course of their business, and even then they couldn't laugh. He was right; he had never come nearer to sending an agent to certain death. On the top of the first case Alexia opened was her writing-pad, just where she had hastily thrown it in the unworldly light of dawn, after finishing that last letter, that all-absorbing letter, to her fiancé. The bag was the only one of the four that had never been examined by Roumanians or Hungarians, and the Czechs had gone like burrowing dogs for the bottom while scattering out the top between their legs.

In the writing-pad—gloriously forgotten, hidden only by a flimsy cardboard cover, not crushed at all to ashes, not even burned—was the sheet of foolscap which Theotaki had given her with such delicate precautions.

* * *

HOME-GROWN

Benjamin Disraeli was not much attracted to his fellow-authors. He met Browning at someone's table, "a noisy, conceited poet"; and when asked whether he had read a novel that was making a stir, he replied, "When I want to read a novel, I write one."

HESKETH PEARSON, *Dizzy*

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★*" Forceps ! " bellowed the surgeon. It is something of an honour, at the start of his surgical course, for the author to find himself appointed dresser to the Senior Surgeon of the Hospital. Sir Lancelot Spratt, tall, bony and red-faced, his bald head ringed with fluffy white hair, represents that colourful, energetic generation of doctors rarely encountered today. His operations are of an extent and originality never seen elsewhere—as his new dresser is about to discover.*

DRIED GINGER

by RICHARD GORDON

ON the first Tuesday after my appointment to Sir Lancelot's " firm " I walked up the stairs to the theatre—students were not allowed to use the hospital lift—and went into the dressers' changing-room. A row of jackets and ties hung under a notice in letters three inches high : DO NOT LEAVE ANYTHING IN YOUR POCKETS.

Everyone entering the theatre had to wear sterile clothing, which was packed away in three metal bins opened by foot pedals. Using a pair of long sterile forceps I took an oblong cap from one, a mask from another, and a rolled white gown from the third. Unfortunately there was no indication of the size of these coverings, and the gown fell round my feet like a bridal dress while the cap perched on my head like a cherry on a dish of ice-cream.

I pushed open the theatre door and stepped inside reverently, like a tourist entering a cathedral. Standing by the door, my hands clasped tightly behind me, all I wanted was completely to escape notice. I felt that even my breathing, which sounded in my ears like the bellows of a church organ, would disturb the sterile, noiseless efficiency of the place. I was also a little uncertain of my reactions to cut flesh and wanted to keep as far away from the scene of activity as possible.

" You, boy ! "

Sir Lancelot's head popped above the caps of his attendants. All I could see of him was a single brown, bushy strip that separated the top of his mask and the edge of his cap, through which there glared two unfriendly eyes, like a hungry tiger's inspecting a native through the undergrowth.

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"Come over here," he shouted. "How often have I got to tell you young fellers you can't learn surgery from the door-post?"

The operating table was in the centre of the bare, tiled room, directly under the wide lamp that hung like a huge inverted saucer from the ceiling. It was completely invisible, as about twenty figures in white gowns were packed round it like tube passengers in the rush-hour. These were mostly students.

The operating team was made up of Sir Lancelot himself, who was a head higher than anyone else in the room; his theatre sister, masked and with all her hair carefully tucked into a sterile white turban, standing on a little platform beside him; his senior houseman, Mr. Stubbins, and his registrar, Mr. Crate, assisting him from the opposite side; and his anæsthetist, sitting on a small metal piano stool beside a chromium-plated barrow of apparatus at the head of the table, reading *The Daily Telegraph*.

On the outskirts of this scrum two nurses in sterile clothes dashed round anxiously, dishing out hot sterilized instruments from small metal bowls like waiters serving spaghetti. A theatre porter, also gowned and masked, leant reflectively on a sort of towel rail used for counting the swabs, and another strode in with a fresh cylinder of oxygen on his shoulder. The only indication that there was a patient present at all was a pair of feet in thick, coarse-knitted bed-socks that stuck out pathetically from one end of the audience.

As soon as Sir Lancelot spoke, the group round the table opened, as if he were Aladdin at the mouth of his cave. I walked unhappily into the centre. My companions closed tightly behind me, and I found myself wedged against the table opposite Sir Lancelot with a man who played in the second row of the hospital forwards immediately behind me. Escape was therefore out of the question, on physical as well as moral grounds.

The operation was on the point of starting. The patient was still invisible, as the body was covered with sterile towels except for a clean-shaved strip of lower abdomen on the right-hand side of which the operating light was focussed diagnostically. I couldn't even see if it was a young man or a woman.

Having forced me into a ringside seat, Sir Lancelot then appeared to dismiss me from his mind. He paused to adjust the cuff of the rubber glove that stretched over his bony hand. Stubbins and Crate were waiting with gauze dabs, and the theatre sister was threading needles with catgut as unconcernedly as if she was going to darn her stockings.

"Stubbins," said Sir Lancelot chattily, making a three-inch incision over the appendix, "remind me to look into Fortnum's

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on my way home, there's a good lad. My missus'll give me hell if I forget her dried ginger again. I suppose it was all right for me to start ? " he asked the anæsthetist.

The Daily Telegraph rustled slightly in assent.

I was surprised. Dried ginger in an operating theatre ? Shopping lists disturbing the sanctity of surgery ? And *The Daily Telegraph* ?

" I've got a damn funny story to tell you lads," went on Sir Lancelot affably, deepening his incision. " Make you all laugh. Happened to me last week. An old lady turned up in my rooms in Harley Street . . . Sister ! " he exclaimed in a tone of sudden annoyance. " Do you expect me to operate with a jam-spreader ? This knife's a disgrace."

He threw it on the floor. Without looking at him she handed him another.

" That's better," Sir Lancelot growled. Then, in his previous tone, as though he were two people making conversation, he went on : " Where was I ? Oh yes, the old lady. Well, she said she'd come to see me on the advice of Lord—Lord Someoneorother, I can't remember these damn titles—whom I'd operated on last year. She said she was convinced she'd got gall-stones.

" Now look here, Stubbins, can't you and Crate keep out of each other's way ? Your job is to use that gauze swab sensibly, not wave it around like a Salvation Army banner. How the devil do you think I can operate properly if everything's wallowing in blood ? Why am I always cursed with assistants who have a couple of left hands ? And I want a clip, Sister. Hurry up, woman, I can't wait all night ! "

Sir Lancelot had cut through the abdominal wall while he was talking, like a child impatient to see inside a Christmas parcel.

" Well," he went on, all affability again, seemingly conducting the operation with the concentration of a gossipy woman knitting a pair of socks, " I said to this old lady, ' Gall-stones, eh ? Now, my dear, what makes you think you've got gall-stones ? ' And I've never seen anyone look so embarrassed in my life ! "

He returned to the operation.

" What's this structure, gentlemen ? "

A reply came from under a student's mask on the edge of the crowd.

" Quite correct, whoever you are," said Sir Lancelot, but without any congratulation in his voice. " Glad to see you fellers remember a little fundamental anatomy from your two years in the rooms . . . so I wondered what was up. After all, patients don't get embarrassed over gall-stones. It's never the old ladies who are coy but the tough young men. Remember that bit of advice,

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gentlemen . . . Come on, Stubbins, wake up! You're as useless as an udder on a bull."

He produced the appendix from the wound like a bird pulling a worm from the ground, and laid it and the attached intestine on a little square of gauze.

"Then the old lady said to me, 'As a matter of fact, Sir Lancelot, I've been passing them all the month . . .' Don't lean on the patient, Stubbins! If I'm not tired you shouldn't be, and I can give you forty or fifty years, my lad.

"So now we come to the interesting part of the story. She showed me a little box, like those things you send out pieces of wedding cake in . . . Sister! What in heaven's name are you threading your needles with? This isn't catgut, it's rope. What's that, woman?" He leant the red ear that stuck out below his cap towards her. "Speak up, don't mutter to yourself. I'm not being rude, damn you! I'm never rude in the theatre. All right, tell your Matron, but give us a decent ligature. That's more like it. Swab, man, swab. Stubbins, did I ever tell you about the Matron when she was a junior theatre nurse? She had a terrible crush on a fellow house-surgeon of mine—chap called Bungo Ross, used to drink like a fish and a devil for the women. Became a respected G.P. in Bognor or somewhere. Died last year. I wrote a damn good obituary of him in the *British Medical Journal*. I'm tying off the appendicular artery gentlemen. See? What's that, Stubbins? Oh, the old lady. Cherry stones."

He tossed the appendix into a small enamel bowl held for him by Stubbins.

"Looks a bit blue this end, George," he said in the direction of the anæsthetist. "All right, I suppose?" The anæsthetist was at the time in the corner of the theatre talking earnestly to one of the nurses who had been serving out the instruments. Theatre kit is unfair to nurses; it makes them look like white bundles. But one could tell from the rough shape of this one, from the little black-stockinged ankles below her gown and the two wide eyes above her mask, that the parcel would be worth the unwrapping. The anæsthetist jumped back to his trolley and began to twiddle the knobs on it. Sister, who was already in a wild temper, injected the nurse with a glance like a syringeful of strychnine.

"Forceps, Sister!" bellowed Sir Lancelot. She handed him a pair which he looked at closely, snapping them together in front of his mask. For some reason they displeased him, so he threw them over the heads of the crowd at the opposite wall. This caused no surprise to anyone, and seemed to be one of his usual habits. She calmly handed him another pair.

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"Swabs correct, Sister, before I close? Good. Terribly important that, gentlemen. Once you've left a swab inside a patient you're finished for life. Courts, damages, newspapers, and all that sort of thing. It's the only disaster in surgery the blasted public thinks it knows anything about. Cut their throats when they're under the anæsthetic, yes, but leave anything inside and you're in the papers in no time. Shove in the skin stitches, Stubbins. What's the next case? Tea? Excellent. Operating always makes me thirsty."

During the following three months I learnt a little about surgery and a lot about surgeons. I learnt more than I wanted to about Sir Lancelot.

In the theatre he was God. Everything in the routine for operating sessions was arranged to suit his convenience. A white linen suit, freshly starched, was carefully warmed by the junior nurse before being laid out in his changing-room in the morning. A thermos pitcher of iced water labelled "Sir Lancelot Spratt ONLY" was set on a silver tray near-by. He had his own masks, his own scrubbing-brush, and his own soap.

When he crossed the theatre floor from the scrub-up basins to the table the onlookers scattered before him like unarmed infantry in front of a tank. If anyone got in his way he simply kicked them out of it. He rarely asked for an instrument but expected the Sister to guess which one to place in his waiting hand. If she made a mistake, he calmly dropped the wrong instrument on to the floor. Should she do no better at her second attempt he repeated his little trick. Once he silently reduced a whole trayful of instruments to an unsterile heap at his feet, and the Sister had hysterics.

Sir Lancelot had a personality like an avalanche and a downright bedside manner that suited equally well a duchess's bedroom or the hospital's out-patient department. He radiated confidence like a lighthouse through a storm. His suggestions on the removal of his patients' organs never met with their objection. The more he did to them, the greater the complications that resulted from his interference, the larger the number of supplementary operations he had to perform to retrieve his errors, the more they thanked him: there was never one but died grateful.

His teaching in the ward, like his surgery in the theatre, was full-blooded. He had a long string of aphorisms and surgical anecdotes, none of which was original or strictly accurate, but they stuck in the minds of his students long after the watery lectures of his colleagues had evaporated.

His round was held every Tuesday morning at ten o'clock,

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and had the same effect on the ward as an admiral's inspection of a small warship.

The preparations for his visit began about five in the morning. The night nurses started the long business of sprucing up the ward to its best pitch of speckless sterility. When Sister and her day staff arrived at seven, the energy given to preparing the long room so that nothing in the slightest way offensive should fall on the great man's eye was increased tenfold. Every article in it was scrubbed and polished thoroughly—the floor, the medicine cupboards, the windows, the instruments, the patients' faces. The bedside lockers, which usually carried a friendly jumble of newspapers, soap, jam, football coupons, and barley-water, were stripped clean and their contents buried out of sight. Even the flowers looked sterile.

The tension and activity in the ward rose together like the temperature and pulse in a fever. At nine the senior house-surgeon, in a fresh white jacket, looked in for a worried, whispered conversation with Sister to be certain everything commanded on the Chief's last visit had been done. He didn't glance at the patients. That morning they were part of the ward furniture, or at most instruments by which the medical staff could demonstrate their abilities to Sir Lancelot.

There was one point, however, on which the patients could not be argued out of their humanity. At nine-fifteen bedpans were issued all round. The acquisition of one of these at such an hour (seven and five were the official times for their use) was usually a business comparable with catching the eye of a waiter in a busy restaurant. At nine-fifteen on Tuesdays, however, they were forced upon the patients. The nurses tripped briskly out of the sluice-room, each carrying a couple under a cloth. This was because Sister thought a request for one of these articles while Sir Lancelot was in the ward unreasonable in the highest degree—indeed, almost indecent.

The bedpans were whipped away a quarter of an hour before the Chief was due. There followed an energetic final ten minutes occupied by a process known as "tidying" the patients. They could obviously not be allowed to disturb the general symmetry of the scene by lolling about in bed anyhow, like a squad of soldiers falling in with their hands in their pockets. They had to be fitted in to the ward neatly and unobtrusively.

The technique was simple. A pair of nurses descended on the patient. First he was shot into the sitting position, and retained there by one nurse while the other smoothed and squared up his pillows (the open ends of the pillow-cases always to face away from the door). He was then dropped gently on his back, so as not to

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ruffle the smooth surface unnecessarily with his head. The bed-clothes were seized at the top by the two young women and pulled taut between them like a tug-of-war ; they next applied the tension upwards from the patient's feet, which brought the top edge of the bed-clothes level with the patient's nostrils. In one quick motion, without releasing the tension to which the blankets were submitted, they tucked them in firmly all round. This made it impossible for the occupant of the bed to perform any muscular movement whatever, except very shallow breathing.

The ward by ten was silent, orderly, and odourless. Sister and the nurses had changed into fresh white aprons and each of them felt like Moses immediately on his arrival at the top of the mountain. Meanwhile, another focus of consternation had formed not far away.

It was the tradition of St. Swithin's that the Chief should be greeted in the courtyard and lead his " firm " to the ward. Surgeons were met in front of the statue of Sir Benjamin Bone and physicians before that of Lord Larrymore. This form of reception resulted in everyone becoming cold in winter, hot in summer, and wet all the year round, and as it had apparently been going on for three or four hundred years this seemed an excellent reason for refusing to alter it.

We gathered for our first ward-round under the cold eye of Sir Benjamin. The differences that divided the " firm," which were emphasized on Tuesday mornings, had already become obvious. The students stood in a little subdued group behind the statue. We wore our suits, with stethoscopes coiling out of our pockets and foolscap notebooks under our arms. We chatted quietly among ourselves, but would not have contemplated exchanging words with the two house-surgeons, who stood apart murmuring to each other with expressions of intense seriousness on their faces.

The third section of the party consisted only of Crate, the registrar. He was allowed to wear a long white coat like the Chief, but as he had no companion to talk to and was unable to converse with his housemen or students at such a solemn moment he had to content himself with looking at the sky in a reflective and earnest way, as if he were turning over in his mind the niceties of surgery or trying to forecast the weather.

At ten the Rolls drew into the courtyard and stopped opposite our group. Crate opened the door and wished Sir Lancelot good morning. The car was driven to its parking-place by the chauffeur and the Chief disappeared with his registrar towards the staff common room to leave his hat and put on his white coat. When

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they reappeared the rest of the party followed them to the wards.

Once Sir Lancelot burst through the ward door more people arranged themselves in his wake. Indeed, it was impossible for a man of his importance to walk about St. Swithin's at all without a procession immediately forming up behind him.

First, of course, was Sir Lancelot, the therapeutic thunderbolt. A pace behind came the registrar, and behind him the two house-surgeons, the senior one leading. After the two housemen was Sister, her long cap trailing behind her like a wind-stocking on an aerodrome. She was followed by her senior staff nurse, who carried a trayful of highly-polished instruments with which the patients could be tapped, scratched, and tickled in the aid of making a diagnosis. Sir Lancelot never used any of them and probably did not know how to, but they were produced every Tuesday nevertheless, like a ceremonial mace.

Behind the staff nurse was a junior nurse bearing a thick board covered with a pad of paper, to which a pencil was attached with a piece of string. The board was marked sternly "Sir Lancelot Spratt's Drawing-paper." On this he would sometimes sketch points of anatomy—not often, about once every six months, but the board had to be flashed to his hand if he asked for it. In the rear of the junior nurse, in the winter months, a probationer carried a hot-water bottle in a small red blanket for Sir Lancelot to warm his hands before applying them to exposed flesh.

At the end of the party, behind even the hot-water bottle, were students: an un-uniformed, disorderly bunch of stragglers.

The Chief spent two hours examining the candidates for the afternoon's operating list, with whom he illustrated to us the principles of surgery. Sometimes he passed all morning on one case, if the patient contained a lump of sufficient interest to him; on other Tuesdays he would whip round the whole ward, diagnosing like a machine-gun. Sitting was forbidden, and towards lunch-time the students shifted heavily from one foot to the other. Sir Lancelot thought that any young man incapable of standing on his own feet for a couple of hours was merely another disagreeable product of modern life, like socialism.

On our first ward-round we were pushed easily into place by the precision with which the rest of the troupe fell in. Sir Lancelot strode across the ward, drew up sharply, and looked over the patients in the two rows of beds, sniffing the air like a dog picking up a scent. He thundered over to the bedside of a small, nervous man in the corner. The "firm" immediately rearranged itself, like a smart platoon at drill. The Chief towered on the right of the patient's head; Sister stood opposite, her nurses squeezed

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behind her; the students surrounded the foot and sides of the bed like a screen; and the registrar and housemen stood beyond them, at a distance indicating that they were no longer in need of any instruction in surgery.

Sir Lancelot pulled back the bed-clothes like a conjuror revealing a successful trick.

"You just lie still, old fellow," he boomed cheerfully at the patient. "Don't you take any notice of what I'm going to say to these young doctors. You won't understand a word of what we're talking about, anyway. Take his pyjamas off, Sister. Now you, my boy," he continued, gripping me tightly by the arm as I was nearest, "take a look at that abdomen."

I stretched out a hand to feel the patient gingerly in the region of the umbilicus. I noticed his skin was covered with goose-pimples and twitched here and there nervously.

"Take your dirty little hand away!" said Sir Lancelot savagely, flicking it off the surface of the abdomen like a fly. He paused solemnly, and continued in a heavy tone, wagging his finger: "The first rule of surgery, gentlemen—eyes first and most, hands next and least, tongue not at all. Look first and don't chatter. An excellent rule for you to remember all your lives. Now look, boy, look."

I gazed at the abdomen for a whole minute but it appeared no different from any that might be seen on Brighton beach. When I thought I had inspected it long enough to satisfy the Chief, who rose uncomfortably above me, I diffidently stretched out my arm and prodded about with my fingers in search of a lump.

"*Doucemong, doucemong*," Sir Lancelot began again. "Gently boy—you're not making bread. Remember"—his finger came up again warningly—"a successful surgeon must have the eye of a hawk, the heart of a lion, and the hand of a lady."

"And the commercial morals of a Levantine usurer," murmured Grimsdyke under his breath.

With a glow of relief, I finally discovered the lump. It was about the size of an orange and tucked under the edge of the ribs. We lined up and felt it one after the other, while Sir Lancelot looked on closely and corrected anyone going about it the wrong way. Then he pulled a red grease-pencil from the top pocket of his coat and handed it to me.

"Where are we going to make the incision?" he asked. By now the patient was forgotten; it was the lump we were after. Sir Lancelot had an upsetting habit of treating the owners of lumps as if they were already rendered unconscious by the anæsthetic.

I drew a modest line over the lesion.

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"Keyhole surgery!" said Sir Lancelot with contempt. "Damnable! Give me the pencil!" He snatched it away. "This, gentlemen, will be our incision."

He drew a broad, decisive, red sweep from the patient's ribs to below his umbilicus.

"We will open the patient like *that*. Then we can have a good look inside. It's no good rummaging round an abdomen if you can't get your hand in comfortably. What do we do then? Right—take a better look at the lump we've been feeling. Do you think it's going to be easy to remove?" he asked me, gripping my arm again.

"No, sir."

"Correct—it's going to be most difficult. And dangerous. There are at least a dozen ways in which we can make a slight error—even though we are experienced surgeons—and kill the patient like that!" He snapped his fingers frighteningly.

"Now!" He tapped the abdomen with his pencil as if knocking for admission. "When we have cut through the skin what is the next structure we shall meet? Come on, you fellers. You've done your anatomy more recently than I have . . . what's that? Yes, subcutaneous fat. Then, gentlemen, we first encounter the surgeon's worst enemy." He glared at us all in turn. "What?" he demanded in general. There was no reply.

"Blood!" he thundered.

At that point the patient restored his personality to the notice of his doctors by vomiting.

★ ***A rickety bike—and a black bag! Next month's ARGOSY contains another of Richard Gordon's entertaining adventures from "Doctor in the House." Like a new errand boy, the author cycles precariously in search of the right door . . .***

* * *

PIECE WORK

The following entries were found in the Churchwardens' accounts at Barnstaple, the first two dated 1558 and the third 1688:

Item. for 13 bushells of lyme and caryg ..	0	14	1
Item. for makin of the caryre drunke.. ..	0	0	1
Item. Paid Will Pinkome for next to nothing	0	15	9

The Countryman, Spring, 1952

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BRIDAL FLOWER

"He leaves you alone two, three weeks?" laughed Geno. "Ah, he is one brave man!"

by M. C. WITHERBEE

MANUEL PERIERA and his bride Marea relaxed on the green bench under the oaks in Tarpon Springs' little *plaza*. The noonday sun smiled down a blessing on them, and Manuel drew Marea's shoulders close, shutting his eyes the better to enjoy the fragrance of her nearness. She was sweetness personified, he thought. Even her breath held the perfume of a flower.

Mine! All mine, Manuel exulted, his warm eyes embracing her in pride of possession.

The little city basked in the sun on the west coast of Florida where the Anclote River joins the Gulf. From the wharves, the sponge fishermen sailed their gaily painted boats to wrest a living from the ocean floor.

The men of the fleet were Greeks, but Manuel, who was a Portuguese, had worked with them so long that he forgot the difference in nationality and took a wife of their race, warm Marea, like a tropic flower.

At the wedding they had tried to tease him, telling him that he could as soon think of keeping Marea for himself as a pelican could keep his catch from a robber gull. Manuel would have to share Marea with other gallants at Tarpon Springs, where he had built a pink cottage on a slope above the harbour.

But on that warm sunny afternoon in February all such thoughts were far from Manuel's mind. Contentedly he encircled Marea's shoulders with a possessive arm. They watched the passers-by from the bench in the little square. Men alighting from the buses at the kerb eyed Marea with lingering glances as they noted the lovely curves beneath her bright pink frock. The brown fingers of Manuel's free hand drummed nervously.

His dark eyes dwelt on a family party progressing down the street, and then on Marea. There was something very maternal about Marea. He was beginning to see that, even now. She needed only a little *menino* to cuddle in her arms to make him feel safe about her forever. Or, even better, many *meninos* strung like little rosy beads on an endless chain of love. When that time came

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he would fear no man, no matter how snapping his black eyes, or dashing his mustachios.

The honking of a horn woke him from his day-dreams. A bus stopped, and people came tumbling out of it like smoke from a chimney. Suddenly Marea jumped up and Manuel's eyes widened with astonishment.

Her face alight, she called excitedly, "Geno! Geno! Over here! Over here!"

A young Greek flung himself from the bus and lunged towards her. Laughing delightedly, Geno seized Marea's hands. Manuel, forgotten, stood silently by while they chattered. Then Marea remembered, and with shy embarrassment introduced her husband.

Geno drew his black belt tighter, shifting his bundle under the other arm. His gleaming smile sharpened the keen glance as he acknowledged the introduction. It was evident that meeting a husband of Marea's in the flesh was a matter to which he must radically re-adjust himself.

"When we married, Manuel, Geno was not home . . . you see, he did not know."

"No, I was down on the ridge," assented Geno, looking over his shoulder at the road which wound down along the Gulf to the orange groves. Then he turned to Manuel with a quizzical glance.

"Why you do not work? Perhaps you are making a *fiesta?*"

"No, no *fiesta.* I just sit in the sun with my Marea, than whom the birds are not more sweet." There was a belligerent swagger in his tone as Manuel replied.

"O, but Manuel! Geno has not the knowledge!" Turning to Geno, Marea explained proudly, "Manuel goes out with the sponge fleet. You thought perhaps he kept a shop?"

Why must she be explaining, fretted Manuel. He wished she had not spoken of his working with the fleet.

Eyebrows cocked over twinkling eyes, Geno said, "He leaves you two, three weeks? Ah, he is one brave man!"

For this Manuel had no response. A growing hostility filled him. If this Geno thought—

An expression of anxiety flitted over Marea's face. She slipped her brown arm in Manuel's and pressed herself against him.

"Come," she said.

The last thing Manuel saw as he looked back was Geno's lazy, graceful figure leaning idly against a tree, the sunshine bathing his black hair and bare brown throat.

During the next few days Manuel recalled many times that careless jest of Geno's. "A brave man to sail with the fleet and leave Marea alone." Manuel dreaded the coming of that time.

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He was sick at heart at the thought of leaving her. She would be lonely. Time would hang heavy on her hands with no little *menino*.

Then Manuel had a brilliant idea. Early one morning he went to Tampa, and when he returned late that afternoon, he swung down the street with a bird-cage in one hand and a box in the other. The cage was large and its trimmings were bright. With little screams of surprise, Marea met him and together they carried the big cage into the tiny living-room. Together they opened the box and insinuated its feathered occupant into his new wire home. He was a parrot . . . a king among green parrots!

Marea, bent in rapturous admiration over the cage, marvelled at the bird's sphinxlike expression. Her hair lay in soft dishevelment about her excited face, and Manuel, spying the damp little curls upon her neck, kissed them, and drew her to him.

"Manuel, Manuel, you are so good to me! You give me so much!" Marea's eyes were open wells of love beneath his gaze.

"Some day, beloved, you shall give to me!" he whispered against her lips.

Some day—some day—Manuel dreamed and dreamed of that day when he would proudly strut down to the wharf to be clapped on the back by every man there and treated to heady wine in a back room. A little Marea, perhaps. But, please God, also a little Manuel.

"I shall teach the bird to say, 'I love you, Marea!' and then when I am gone you will hear me speaking."

"But I shall teach him to say, 'I love you, Manuel'," Marea replied. "And for every time I say it, it shall thus be said twice!"

The parrot learned his lesson quickly and well. Manuel listened as the bird, hanging by one foot, would croon a few notes and repeat, "Manuel . . . I love you Manuel!"

Manuel would retort with a chuckle, "But I love Marea," and go to find her.

At last there were but a few hours before the fleet would sail. Dawn would find them at sea. Manuel dreaded the parting. One never knew how many weeks it might take to reap a cargo from the ocean floor. Many things could happen. Sponge fishing could be dangerous . . . there was always the hazard of trouble with the life-line, the air-hose. An octopus, if he was grown, made a dangerous foe. Marea was so sweet! Too sweet to leave alone.

When he entered the cottage, having treasured these last few hours in his thoughts as he climbed the hill from work, who should be there but Geno! Cap on table, hands in his pockets, he was standing in front of the cage and admiring the bird.

"Hello, Manuel!" Geno grinned. "I asked where Manuel

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Periera lived, the man with the most beautiful wife in Tarpon Springs. They told me how to get here and never miss a turning."

Anxiety hid behind Marea's smile as she greeted her husband.

"Manuel! Don't believe him!" she expostulated. "I went over to the shops and saw him waiting for the bus. We talked. Naturally, he wants to see my house. I've known him a long time, Manuel. So I brought him home to supper!" She finished triumphantly, as if with such an explanation even a jealous husband should not be vexed.

But Manuel was not a sunny host. Supper over, they sat on the little verandah overlooking the harbour. Gulls flapped their way across the water to shallows where they rested for the night. Dusk let its last shadowy curtain fall. The air was very still, and heavy with the scent of orange blossom. No one spoke. Manuel resentfully stifled a longing to reach for Marea's warm little hand.

Suddenly a boy in uniform slid from his bicycle, took the steps at a leap and handed Manuel a yellow envelope. It was the first telegram he had ever had in his whole life, and he would rather have handled a rattlesnake than have to open it. But Marea was looking at him with eyes filled with concern. Geno, too, had an expression of lively curiosity. So with an air which he hoped showed his familiarity with telegrams, Manuel poked a finger laboriously under the flap and withdrew the paper. It was a cablegram, short and to the point. When he had finished reading, he crumpled the message and thrust it in his pocket.

"Manuel, what does it say?" questioned Marea anxiously.

"Just business, my sweet. Just business."

Manuel shut his lips and narrowed his eyes craftily. Not for worlds would he let Geno know what was on that paper. Not for worlds would he let him know that within another twenty-four hours he would be starting across the ocean to far-away Madeira, where his father lay dying. It would mean a longer trip than any sponging trip, and Marea would be left alone for many weeks. No, Geno should not know what was in that yellow envelope. Geno with the small waist and laughing eyes.

Manuel glanced insolently at Geno. "What bus you taking?" he suggested.

When the door had closed and the sound of Geno's footsteps had faded in the distance, Manuel took Marea in his arms and read the crumpled message that called him to Madeira. He forgot his dismay in soothing hers.

Next morning when he started on the long journey, he carried with him the picture of dusky-eyed Marea standing under the clinging vines of the verandah. She was trying hard to smile a brave

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farewell. The bright-hued parrot on her finger called and called, "Manuel, I love you! Manuel, I love you!"

She cannot forget, thought Manuel. Bless the bird's black tongue!

When old Pierre Periera had been laid away in the Campo Santo on his native hillside, Manuel took his way home sadly and without a word of warning to Marea. In spite of the bundle of letters in his portmanteau he felt that Marea was his no more. Less and less did she complain in them that she was alone.

Manuel walked the deck and envied the sea-birds swiftly winging their way towards the horizon. The ship seemed to crawl! He pounded the rail with his fist in an agony of impatience.

The day came when he alighted from the bus in the little square. He swung off just as Geno had done that day so long ago, but there was no one there to meet him. A pleasant surprise for her, he told himself.

A demon whispered, "Some man will have pursued her. *She will have forgotten you.* Women cannot live without love." He found himself cursing the man before he even knew who he might be.

He went up the steps and into the little house in great haste. The silence struck him. The stillness was like a blow in the face. He stared dully about the little hall where his cap still hung on its peg.

Suddenly there was a chuckle from the living-room, and startled, Manuel strode in. In its cage in the corner the parrot climbed about by beak and claw, muttering and chuckling to itself.

A grin broke over Manuel's set face.

"I love you, Marea," urged Manuel caressingly.

"I love you . . . Polly, Polly, Polly," repeated the wary bird.

Manuel took a deep breath and began again, patiently, "I love you, Ma . . ."

The parrot interrupted with a string of oaths, ending with, "My Geno. Good Geno. I love Geno!"

Manuel bent forward as if to spring. "You black-tongued devil!" he spat at the bird who leered at him with sinister shuttered eyes.

The parrot gave a final sidling dance along its perch and ended its maundering babble with, "My Geno, good Geno, I love my Geno."

Manuel glared. It was enough. His face distorted with passion he plunged from the little house where he and Marea had had their dreams together. The road streamed behind him in a hot dusty ribbon as he ran. Only let him reach the wharf! Only let

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him see her lovely face, a face brushed by the kisses of that gibing man from Tampa who had warned him not to leave her!

Strange ugly sounds like those of a stricken beast came from him as he ran. When he reached the little street by the shore, through eyes that dripped sweat he saw her there in the little pink dress, the gay kerchief crossed about those lovely shoulders. The sun shone on the soft ringlets which his hands had so loved to fondle, on that face he loved so well!

Across from the shops, Marea was chatting on the wharf while she leaned idly against a boat. The man to whom she talked bent over a coil of rope. Manuel could not see his face. Was it Geno? No matter, this man, all men, were his enemies! They had been like the snake that crawls. And she . . .?

At the sound of Manuel's running feet the man looked up from his coil of rope. It was Geno. Marea stood transfixed, staring, speechless.

Stripping off his coat as he reached the wharf, Manuel, crazed with fury, lunged for his man and hit him a mighty blow. Like a cat, Geno turned to defend himself. Marea, screaming with terror, flung herself at them. Manuel could feel her hands upon his shoulders, hear her cries of fright, knew she would protect this man from him if she could.

And then a cloud of red flooded his eyes. Afterwards he never knew quite what happened. When it had passed he was standing overcome by a deadly nausea, the wharf circling madly round him.

A policeman edged his way into the crowd and listened gravely to the excited chatter of the women who cradled Marea in their arms. Heavy hands restrained him as he tried to grope dazedly towards his love.

Friends, love, home—*gone*, thought Manuel bitterly as he bent before the lowering faces.

With a sudden flutter of the pink dress, Marea broke away to fling herself into his arms.

"Manuel, Manuel, how could you? Geno, who is our friend!" The words were muffled in her sobs.

Holding her at arm's length, Manuel studied her face, his dark eyes shadowed by a frown.

"Geno our friend!" he said hotly. "Even that black-tongued parrot in our house calls his name in love!"

Marea flung out a protesting hand. "The parrot spoke of Geno, that is true, my husband. But it was not the Geno here. That was its master's name. His master from whom I bought him when our parrot died."

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Dazed but vehement, Geno interrupted sharply, "This bird? I do not know him! He is a strange bird from the ship!"

"Geno, that is a so-common name," explained Marea.

Manuel looked from one to the other. Shame swept him like a flood. It surged in a burning wave up the back of his neck to his ears. Remorse choked his speech. His gaze fell abashed, as Marea watched him anxiously, her hand pressed tight upon her lips.

Shifting his weight from one foot to the other, Manuel raised his pleading eyes to hers and then extended his hands, palms upward, in complete surrender. His glance swept her beloved body from the soft dark hair to the sandalled feet. Suddenly he started. There had been subtle changes since he left her that day under the clinging vines of the verandah.

He raised his eyes to hers. Marea's face mantled with a flush which swept to the soft curls. Their eyes met in rapturous question and assent.

She rushed to him, pillowed her head, "Yes, my beloved," she whispered against his shoulder. "Our *menino*, our very own *menino*. Soon, my husband."

Manuel's face became transfigured. "Marea, my own," he whispered against her hair, then tipped her chin and kissed her tremulous lips before them all.

The policeman, hands on hips, nodded in sympathetic approval as he pronounced judgment.

"Take her home, man. Take her home."

"And wring that damn bird's neck," joked Geno.

Climbing to the pink cottage on the hillside, his arm once more possessively about Marea's shoulders, Manuel paused only to shout a laughing rebuke. His face widened into a swaggering grin as his voice boomed back.

"I'll not hurt a feather of him! 'Twill be no time at all, anyway, before you hear his black tongue crying like a baby!"

* * *

SNAP!

The traffic at Hyde Park Corner was, as usual, rather congested, but nevertheless a small, elderly lady began crossing against the lights and waving excitedly to the policeman on duty. He managed to halt the traffic just in time to save her, and his own life. He was pretty annoyed until she said sweetly, "Oh, I just wanted to tell you, Officer, that the number on your uniform is the same as my favourite hymn."

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SONG OF SIXPENCE

Lack of money is the root of all evil

MARK TWAIN

I truste yn Gode to bryng all maters to a good passe, yf I hade mony . . . Sir, I pray yowe send uppe sum mony, or else I cannot tell what to do.

WILLIAM ROWCLYFFE,
in a letter to John Trevelyan, 1490

A Penny Saved is Impossible

The further through life I drift
The more obvious it becomes that I am lacking in thrift.
Now thrift is such a boon to its possessor that years ago they began to tax it,
But it is a bane to him that lacks it
Because if you lack it you will go into a shoppe and pay two dollars for a gifte,
But if you possess it you find something just as good for a dollar fifte . . .
Oh that I were thrifty, because thrifty people leave estates to delight their next of kin with ;
Oh yes that I were thrifty, because then not only would I have money in the bank to pay my bills, but I could leave the money in the bank because I wouldn't have run up the bills to begin with ;
Oh that I were not a spendthrift, oh then would my heart indeed be gladsome,
Because it is so futile being a spendthrift because I don't know any places where thrift could be spent even if I had some.

OGDEN NASH, *Good Intentions*

In Brief

The seven deadly sins . . . Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from man's neck but money . . .

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, *Major Barbara*

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Widow's Mite

A vinegary face has Mrs. Miff, and a mortified bonnet, and eke a thirsty soul for sixpences and shillings. Beckoning to stray people to come into pews, has given Mrs. Miff an air of mystery; and there is reservation in the eye of Mrs. Miff, as always knowing of a softer seat, but having her suspicions of the fee. There is no such fact as Mr. Miff, nor has there been, these twenty years, and Mrs. Miff would rather not allude to him. He held some bad opinions, it would seem, about free seats; and though Mrs. Miff hopes he may be gone upwards, she couldn't possibly undertake to say so.

CHARLES DICKENS, *Dombey and Son*

No Orchids

Araminta, sweetest, fairest!
Solace once of, every ill!
How I wonder if thou bearest
Mivins in remembrance still!
If that Friday night is banished
From a once retentive mind,
When the others somehow vanished,
And we two were left behind:—

When in accents low, yet thrilling,
I did all my love declare;
Mentioned that I'd not a shilling—
Hinted that we need not care;
And complacently you listened
To my somewhat long address,
And I thought the tear that glistened
In the downdropt eye said Yes . . .

C. S. CALVERLEY,
Ode On a Distant Prospect of Making a Fortune

The Necessaire Cace

And because of this turne will of necessitie dryve me to extra-ordinarie chargiz I must hairtelie praye you at this tyme to send me that quhole summe of Annuitie quhiche I did the last yeire require of You; not that I ame ignorant of the greatness of your present adoes, but that I trust ye will in this turne your eyes a littell from looking upon youre ouin estait to blinke upon the necessaire cace of youre Friend.

JAMES VI OF SCOTLAND,
in a letter to Queen Elizabeth I, *July 5th*, 1592

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They Not Asking Me . . .

This being Christmas-day, myself and wife at church in the morning. We stayed the Communion; my wife gave 6d., but they not asking me I gave nothing. Oh, may we increase in faith and good works, and maintain and keep the good intentions that I hope we have this day taken up.

THOMAS TURNER, *Diary, December 25th, 1758*

Chaucer Complains to his Empty Purse

To yow, my purse, and to noon other wight
Complayne I, for ye be my lady dere!
I am so sory, now that ye been lyght;
For certes, but ye make me hevy chere,
Me were as leef be layd upon my bere;
For which unto your mercy thus I crye:
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now voucheth sauf this day, or yt be nyght,
That I of yow the blisful soun may here,
Or see your colour lyk the sonne bryght,
That of yelownesse hadde never pere.
Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere,
Quene of comfort and of good companye:
Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moote I dye!

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Mortification

It was a sparkling, bitter winter early afternoon. My father was walking through Leicester Square, with my brother on one side of him, and with me on the other. We were both in the uniform of the Grenadiers, with large grey great-coats, and my father was wearing a top-hat and a blue heavy coat with a wide fur collar. Suddenly a bonneted Salvation Army Lassie came up, and holding out a wooden money-box towards my father, jingled it, and said to him, very gently and sweetly,

"Give something for Self-Denial Week, sir!"

My father stopped walking, as if overcome by the shock he had received, and then, after fixing on her for some instants a look of the utmost severity and moral disapprobation, pronounced, in patient saint-like tones, these words,

"With *Some* People, Self-Denial Week is *Every* Week."

Then he proceeded on his way.

OSBERT SITWELL, *Great Morning*

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SOUND OF THUNDER

"Step on a mouse," he said, "and perhaps Rome never rises on her seven hills"

by RAY BRADBURY

THE sign on the office wall read:

TIME SAFARI, INC.
SAFARIS TO ANY YEAR IN THE PAST
YOU NAME THE ANIMAL
WE TAKE YOU THERE
YOU SHOOT IT

Mr. Eckels smiled nervously and handed a cheque for ten thousand dollars to the man behind the desk.

"Does this safari guarantee I come back alive?"

"We guarantee nothing," said the official, "except the dinosaurs." He turned. "This is Mr. Travis, your Safari Guide in the Past. He'll tell you what and where to shoot. If he says no shooting, no shooting. If you don't follow directions, there's a stiff penalty of another ten thousand dollars, plus possible government action, on your return."

Eckels looked across the vast office at an arrangement of wires, golden boxes and an aurora that flickered like a great bonfire.

"Hell and damn," Eckels breathed, the light of the Machine on his thin face. "A real time machine." He shook his head. "Makes you think. If the election had gone badly yesterday, I might be here now running away from the results. Thank God Keith won. He'll make a fine President of the United States."

"Yes," said the man behind the desk. "We're lucky. If Lyman had got in, we'd have had the worst kind of dictatorship. There's an anti-everything man for you—a militarist, anti-Christ, anti-human, anti-intellectual. People called us up, you know, joking but not joking. Said if Lyman got elected they wanted to go and live in 1492. Of course it's not our business to conduct escapes, but to form safaris. Anyway, Keith's President now. All you've got to worry about is—"

"Shooting my dinosaur," Eckels said.

"A Tyrannosaurus rex. The damnedest monster in history.

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Sign this release. If anything happens to you, we're not responsible. Those dinosaurs are hungry."

Eckels flushed angrily. "Trying to scare me!"

"Frankly, yes. We don't want anyone going who'll panic at the first shot. Six safari leaders were killed last year, and a dozen hunters. We're here to give you the damnedest thrill a real hunter ever asked for. Taking you back sixty million years to bag the biggest damned game in all time. Your personal cheque's still there. Tear it up."

Mr. Eckels looked at the cheque for a long time. His fingers twitched.

"Good luck," said the man behind the desk. "Mr. Travis, he's all yours."

They moved silently across the room, taking their guns with them, towards the Machine, towards the silver metal and the roaring light . . .

First a day and then a night and then a day and then a night, then it was day-night-day-night-day. A week, a month, a year, a decade! 2056 A.D., 2019 A.D., 1999! 1957! Gone! The Machine roared.

They put on their oxygen helmets and tested the intercoms.

Eckels swayed on the padded seat, his face pale, his jaw stiff. He felt the trembling in his arms, and he looked down and found his hands tight on the new rifle. There were four other men in the Machine; Travis, the safari leader; his assistant, Lesperance; and two other hunters, Billings and Kramer. They sat looking at one another, and the years blazed around them.

"Can these guns get a dinosaur cold?" Eckels felt his mouth saying.

"If you hit them right," Travis said on the helmet radio. "Some dinosaurs have the equivalent of two brains, one in the head, another—a nerve plexus—far down the spinal column. We stay away from those. That's stretching luck. Put your first two shots into the eyes, if you can—blind them and go back into the brain."

The Machine howled. Time was a film run backwards. Suns fled and ten million moons fled after them. "Good God," said Eckels. "Every hunter that ever lived would envy us today. This makes Africa seem like Illinois."

The Machine slowed; its scream fell to a murmur. The Machine stopped.

The sun stopped in the sky.

The fog that had enveloped the Machine blew away, and they were in an old time, a very old time indeed, three hunters and two safari heads with their blue metal guns across their knees.

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" Christ isn't born yet," said Travis. " Moses has not gone to the mountain to talk with God. The Pyramids are still in the earth, waiting to be cut out and put up. Remember that. Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler—none of them exists."

The men nodded.

" That," Mr. Travis said, pointing, " is the jungle of sixty million two thousand and fifty-five years before President Keith."

He indicated a metal path that wandered into green wilderness, over steaming swamp, among giant ferns and palms.

" And that," he said, " is the Path, laid by Time Safari for your use. It floats six inches above the earth. Doesn't touch so much as one grass blade, flower or tree. It's an anti-gravity metal. Its purpose is to keep you from touching this world of the past in any way. Stay on the Path. Don't go off it. I repeat: *Don't go off.* For *any* reason! If you fall off, there's a penalty. And don't shoot any animal we don't O.K."

" Why? " asked Eckels.

They sat in the ancient wilderness. Far birds' cries blew on a wind, and the smell of tar and an old salt sea, moist grasses and flowers the colour of blood.

" We don't want to change the future. We don't belong here in the past. The government doesn't *like* us here. We have to pay big money to keep our permit. A time machine is a damn finicky business. Not knowing it, we might kill an important animal, a small bird, a cockroach, a flower, thus destroying an important link in a growing species."

" That's not clear," said Eckels.

" All right," Travis continued, " say we accidentally kill one mouse here. That means all the future families of this one particular mouse are destroyed, right? "

" Right."

Travis said, " And all the families of the families of the families of that one mouse! With a stamp of your foot, you annihilate first one, then a dozen, then a thousand, a million, a *billion* possible mice! "

" So they're dead," said Eckels. " So what? "

" So what? " Travis snorted quietly. " Well, what about the foxes that'll need those mice to survive? For want of ten mice, a fox dies. For want of a fox, all manner of insects, vultures, infinite billions of life forms are thrown into chaos and destruction. Sixty million years later, a cave man, one of a dozen in the *entire world*, goes hunting wild boars or sabre-toothed tigers, for food. But you, friend, have stepped on all the tigers in that region. By stepping on *one* single mouse.

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"So the cave man starves. And the cave man, please note, is not just *any* expendable man, no! He is an *entire future nation.* From his loins would have sprung ten sons. From their loins one hundred sons, and thus onward to a civilization. Destroy this one man, and you destroy a race, a people, an entire history. It is comparable to slaying some of Adam's grandchildren. The stamp of your foot on one mouse could start an earthquake, the effects of which could shake our destinies down through Time, to their very foundations.

"With the death of that one cave man, a billion unborn are throttled in the womb. Perhaps Rome never rises on her seven hills. Perhaps Europe is forever a dark forest. Step on a mouse and leave your print, a Grand Canyon across eternity. Washington might not cross the Delaware. There might never be a United States at all. So be careful. Stay on the Path!"

"Then," said Eckels, "it would be dangerous for us even to touch the *grass*?"

"Correct. Crushing certain plants could add up, infinitesimally. A little error here would multiply in sixty million years, all out of proportion. Of course, maybe our theory is wrong. Maybe Time can't be changed by us. Or maybe it can be changed only in little, subtle ways. A dead mouse here makes an insect imbalance there, a population disproportion later, a bad harvest further on, a depression, mass starvation and, finally, a change in *social* temperament in far-flung countries. Something more subtle, like that.

"But until we know for certain whether our messing around in Time *can* make a big or little change in history, we're being careful. This machine, the Path, your clothing and bodies, were made sterile, as you know, before the journey. We wear these oxygen helmets so we can't introduce our bacteria into an ancient era."

"How do we know which animals to shoot?"

"They're marked with red paint," said Travis. "Today, before our trip, we sent Lesperance here with the Machine. He came to this particular era and followed certain animals."

"Studying them?"

"Right," said Lesperance. "I track them through their entire existence, noting which of them live long. Very few. How many times they mate. Not often. Life's short.

"When I find one that's going to die when a tree falls on him, or one that drowns in a tar pit, I note the exact hour, minute and second. I shoot a paint bomb. It leaves a red patch on his hide. We can't miss it. Then I correlate our arrival in the past so that we meet the monster not more than two minutes before he would have died anyway. This way, we kill animals with no future, that are never going to mate again. You see how *careful* we are?"

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"But if you came back this morning, in Time," said Eckels eagerly, "you must've bumped into *us*, our safari! How did it turn out? Was it successful? Did all of us get through—alive?"

Travis and Lesperance gave each other a look.

"That'd be a paradox," said Lesperance. "Time doesn't permit that sort of mess—a man meeting himself. When such occasions threaten, Time steps aside. Like an aeroplane hitting an air pocket. You felt the Machine jump just before we stopped? That was us passing ourselves on the way back to the future. We saw nothing. There's no way of telling if this expedition was a success, if we got our monster, or whether all of us—meaning *you*, Mr. Eckels—got out alive."

Eckels smiled palely.

"Cut that," said Travis, sharply. "Everyone on his feet!"

They were ready to leave the Machine.

The jungle was high and the jungle was broad and the jungle was the entire world forever and forever. Sounds like music and sounds like flying tents filled the sky, and those were pterodactyls flying with cavernous grey wings, gigantic bats out of a delirium and a night fever. Eckels, balanced on the narrow path, aimed his rifle playfully.

"Forbidden!" said Travis. "Don't even aim for fun. If your gun should go off—"

Eckels flushed. "Where's our Tyrannosaurus?"

Lesperance checked his wrist watch. "Up ahead. We'll bisect his trail in sixty seconds. Look for the red paint, for God's sake. Don't shoot till we give the word. Stay on the Path. *Stay on the Path!*"

They moved forward in the wind of morning.

"Strange," murmured Eckels. "Up ahead, sixty million years, Election Day over. Keith made President. Everyone celebrating. And here we are, a million years lost, and they don't exist. The things we worried about for months, a lifetime, not even born or thought about yet."

"Safety catches off, everyone!" ordered Travis. "You, first shot, Eckels. Second, Billings. Third, Kramer."

"I've hunted tiger, wild boar, buffalo, elephant, but this is *it*!" said Eckels. "I'm shaking like a kid."

"Ah!" said Travis.

Everyone stopped.

Travis raised his hand. "Ahead," he whispered. "In the mist. There he is. There's his royal majesty now."

The jungle was wide and full of twitterings, rustlings, murmurs

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and sighs. Suddenly it all ceased, as if someone had shut a door. Silence. A sound of thunder.

Out of the mist, one hundred yards away, came Tyrannosaurus rex.

"Great God," whispered Eckels.

"Sh!"

It came on great, oiled, resilient, striding legs. It towered twenty feet above trees, a huge evil god, folding its delicate watchmaker's claws to its oily, reptilian chest. Each lower leg was a piston, a thousand pounds of white bone sunk in thick ropes of muscle, sheathed over in a gleam of pebbled skin like the mail of a terrible warrior. Each thigh was a ton of meat, ivory and steel mesh. And from the great breathing cage of the upper body those two delicate arms dangled out in front, arms with hands which might pick up and examine men like toys, while the snake neck coiled. And the head, a ton of sculptured stone itself, lifted easily upon the sky. Its mouth gaped, exposing a fence of teeth like daggers. Its eyes rolled, ostrich eggs, empty of all expression save hunger.

It ran, its pelvic bones crushing aside trees and bushes, its taloned feet clawing damp earth, leaving prints six inches deep wherever it settled its weight. It ran with a gliding ballet step, far too poised and balanced for its ten tons. It moved into a sunlit arena, warily, its beautiful reptile hands feeling the air.

"My God." Eckels twisted his mouth. "It could reach up and grab the moon."

"Sh!" Travis said angrily. "He hasn't seen us yet."

"It can't be killed." Eckels pronounced this verdict quietly, as if there could be no argument. He had weighed the evidence, and this was his considered opinion. The rifle in his hands seemed a cap gun. "We were fools to come. This is impossible."

"Shut up," hissed Travis.

"Nightmare."

"Turn round," commanded Travis. "Walk quietly to the Machine. We'll remit one half your fee."

"Didn't realize it would be this *big*," said Eckels. "Miscalculated. I must get out."

"It sees us!"

"There's the red paint, on its chest!"

The Tyrannosaurus raised itself. Its armoured flesh glittered like a thousand green coins. The coins, crusted with slime, steamed. In the slime, tiny insects wriggled, so that the entire body seemed to twitch and undulate, even while the monster itself did not move. It exhaled. The stink of raw flesh blew down the wilderness.

"Get me out," said Eckels. His mouth moved several times.

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A few words fell from his tongue. His jaw worked. "Too much. Too much. Never. Never like this before." Then he made a series of grunting sounds, as if he had been hit, very hard, in the stomach.

"Don't run," said Lesperance. "Turn round. Hide in the Machine."

"Yes." Eckels seemed to be numb. He looked at his feet, as if he were trying to make them move. He gave another helpless grunt and started out.

"Eckels!"

He took a few steps, blinking, shuffling.

"Not *that* way!"

The monster, at the first motion, lunged forward with a terrible scream. It covered one hundred yards in a few seconds. The rifles jerked up and blazed fire. A windstorm from the beast's mouth engulfed them in the stench of slime and old blood. The monster roared, teeth glittering with sun.

Eckels, not looking back, walked blindly to the edge of the Path, his gun limp in his arms, stepped off the Path, and walked, not knowing it, in the jungle. His feet sank into green moss. His legs moved him, and he felt alone and remote from the events behind.

The rifles cracked again. Their sound was lost in shriek and lizard thunder. The great lever of the reptile's tail swung up and lashed sideways. Trees exploded in clouds of leaf and branch. The monster twitched its jeweller's hands down to fondle at the men, to twist them in half, to crush them like berries, to cram them into its teeth and its screaming throat. Its boulder-stone eyes levelled with the men. They saw themselves mirrored. They fired at the metallic eyelids and the blazing black iris.

Like a stone idol, like a mountain avalanche, Tyrannosaurus fell. Thundering, it clutched trees, pulled them with it. It wrenched and tore the metal Path. The men flung themselves back. The body hit, ten tons of cold flesh and stone. The guns fired. The monster lashed its armoured tail, twitched its snake jaws, and lay still. A fount of blood spurted from its throat. Somewhere inside, a sac of fluids burst. Sickening gushes drenched the hunters. They stood, red and glistening.

The thunder faded. The jungle was silent. After the avalanche, a green peace. After the nightmare, morning.

In the time machine, on his face, Eckels lay shivering. He had found his way back to the Path and climbed into the Machine.

Travis came walking, glanced at Eckels, took cotton gauze

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from a metal box, and returned to the others, who were sitting on the Path. "Clean up."

They wiped the blood from their helmets. The monster lay, a hill of solid flesh. Within, you could hear the sighs and murmurs as the farthest chambers of it died, the organs malfunctioning, liquids running a final instant from pocket to sac to spleen, everything shutting off, closing up forever.

It was a little like standing by a steam engine watching all the valves being released or levered tight. Bones cracked; the tonnage of its own flesh, off balance, dead weight, snapped the delicate forearms, caught underneath. The meat settled, quivering. Another cracking sound. A heavy tree broke from its mooring and fell. It crashed upon the dead beast with finality.

"There." Lesperance checked his watch. "Right on time. That's the tree that was scheduled to fall and kill this animal, originally." He glanced at the two hunters. "You want the trophy picture?"

"What?"

"We can't take a trophy back to the future. The body has to stay right here where it would have died originally; so the insects, birds and bacteria can get at it, as they were intended to. Everything in balance. The body stays. But we *can* take a picture of you standing near it."

The two men tried to think, but gave up, shaking their heads. They let themselves be led along the metal Path. They sank wearily into the Machine cushions. They gazed back at the ruined monster, the stagnating mound, where already strange reptilian birds and golden insects were busy at the steaming armour.

A sound on the floor of the time machine stiffened them. Eckels sat there, shivering.

"I'm sorry," he said at last.

"Get up!" cried Travis.

Eckels got up.

"Go out on that Path alone," said Travis. He had his rifle pointed. "You're not coming back in the Machine. We're leaving you here!"

Lesperance seized Travis' arm. "Wait!"

"Stay out of this!" Travis shook his hand away. "This stupid fool nearly killed us. But it isn't *that* so much. Hell, no. It's his *shoes*! *Look* at them! He ran off the Path. My God, that ruins us! Who knows how much we'll forfeit! Tens of thousands of dollars of insurance! We guarantee no one leaves the Path. He left it. Oh, the damn fool! I'll have to report to the government. They might revoke our licence to travel. God knows *what* he's done to Time, to History!"

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"Take it easy. All he did was kick up some dirt."

"How do we know?" cried Travis. "We don't know anything! It's all a damn mystery! Get out there, Eckels!"

Eckels fumbled with his shirt. "I'll pay anything. A hundred thousand dollars!"

Travis glared at Eckels' cheque book and spat. "Go out there. The monster's next to the Path. Stick your arms up to your elbows in his mouth. Then you can come back with us."

"That's unreasonable!"

"The monster's dead. The bullets! The bullets can't be left behind. They don't belong in the past—they might change something. Here's my knife. Dig them out!"

The jungle was alive again, full of the old tremors and bird cries. Eckels turned slowly to stare at that primeval garbage dump, that hill of nightmares and terror. After a long time, like a sleep-walker, he shuffled out along the Path.

He returned, shuddering, five minutes later, his arms soaked and red to the elbows. He held out his hands. Each held a number of steel bullets.

Then he fell. He lay where he fell, not moving.

"You didn't have to make him do that," said Lesperance.

"Didn't I? It's too early to tell." Travis nudged the still body. "He'll live. Next time he won't go hunting game like this. O.K." He jerked his thumb wearily at Lesperance. "Switch on. Let's go home."

1492 . . . 1776 . . . 1812.

They cleaned their hands and faces. They changed their caking shirts and pants. Eckels was up and around again, not speaking. Travis glared at him for a full ten minutes.

"Don't look at me," cried Eckels. "I haven't done anything."

"Who can tell?"

"Just ran off the Path, that's all. A little mud on my shoes—What do you want me to do—get down and pray?"

"We might need it. I'm warning you, Eckels, I might kill you yet. I've got my gun ready."

"I'm innocent. I haven't done anything!"

1999 . . . 2000 . . . 2056. The Machine stopped.

"Get out," said Travis.

The room was as they had left it. The same man sat behind the same desk. Travis looked around, suspiciously. "Everything O.K. here?" he snapped.

"Fine. Welcome home!"

Travis relaxed. "O.K., Eckels, get out," he said. "Don't ever come back."

Eckels didn't move.

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"You heard me," said Travis. "What're you staring at?"

Eckels stared at the sign on the office wall, the same sign he had seen earlier that day, when he had first come into the room. But somehow the sign had changed.

TIEME SEFARI INC.
SEFARIS TU ANY YEER EN THE PAST
YU NAIM THE ANIMALL. WEE TAEK
YU THAIR
YU SHOOT ITT

Eckels felt himself fall into a chair. He fumbled crazily at the thick slime on his boots. He held up a clod of dirt, trembling. "No, it *can't* be. Not a little thing like that! No!"

Embedded in the mud, glistening green and gold and black, was a butterfly, very beautiful, and very dead.

"Not a little thing like *that!* Not a butterfly!" cried Eckels.

It fell to the floor, an exquisite thing, a small thing that could upset balances and knock down a line of small dominoes and then big dominoes and then gigantic dominoes, all down the years across Time. Eckels's mind whirled. It *couldn't* change things. Killing one butterfly couldn't be that important! Could it?

His face was cold. His mouth trembled, asking: "Who—who won the Presidential election yesterday?"

The man behind the desk laughed. "You joking? You know damn well. Lyman, of course! Who else? Not that damn weakling Keith. We got an iron man now, a man with guts!" The official stopped. "What's wrong?"

Eckels moaned. He dropped to his knees. He scrabbled at the golden butterfly with shaking fingers. "Can't we," he pleaded to the world, to himself, to the officials, to the Machine, "can't we take it back, can't we *make* it alive again? Can't we start over again! Can't we—"

He looked up into Travis's angry, frightened face.

Travis shook his head.

* * *

HEALTH INSURANCE

An army medical officer, testing the water supply, asked the sergeant what precautions he took against infection.

"We boil the water first, sir," replied the sergeant.

"Good!"

"Then we filter it."

"Excellent!"

"And then, for safety's sake, we drink beer."

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A MARITIME PEOPLE

"We shan't mind if it's a bit chippy-choppy," declared Mrs. Kynaston

by JAMES REID PARKER

THE brilliant sunlight not only intensified the blue of the bay but dramatically heightened the autumn colouring of the scrub growth on the many small islands we see from the south-east windows of our house on the New England coast. Never before had the foliage of the low-bush blueberries seemed such a flamboyant red. For nearly a week, the days had been wonderfully warm, although the nights had been more than crisp enough to remind us that fall was nearly at an end. I asked my wife and our two English house guests, the Kynastons, to excuse me, and got up from the breakfast table and went outdoors to make sure of the wind direction and to do some amateur forecasting.

"It's almost certain to stay sunny throughout the day, and probably tomorrow, too," I said when I returned. "There's a moderate westerly breeze. It may freshen a bit later on, but the barometer is still at 'Fair.'"

"Very gratifying," Professor Kynaston said, in his thin mandarin voice.

"What would you like to see today?" I asked him.

He considered the matter at some length, and with his customary gravity, before replying. "I believe we exhausted the conifers yesterday, and most of the other acid-loving trees," he said. "However, I'm not entirely sure that my notes on the hollies are complete. Did I understand you to say at dinner last night that we had seen *all* your indigenous hollies?"

I should explain that Professor Kynaston had been making a comparative study of our trees and those that grow along the coastal areas of western Scotland, prior to making a report to some sort of royal commission for the improvement of barren land over there. As for me, I am a local tree warden, and my wife and I were entertaining the Kynastons because a higher authority had asked us to.

Our guests were in their middle fifties or thereabouts, and exceedingly sedate. This was the third day of their stay with us, and they were to depart the next morning. No real intimacy had

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developed between us, inasmuch as my wife and I respected the fact that the Kynastons simply weren't the kind of people who could thaw, or even make a pretence of thawing, on short acquaintance.

"Yes," I said. "At least, we've seen all the hollies that can be described as being useful for any practical purpose. As I said yesterday, most New England tree wardens and foresters consider hollies quite hopeless for windbreaks and that kind of thing, except perhaps for the *Ilex glabra*."

"Oh, I agree," he broke in quickly. "And as far as *Ilex glabra* is concerned, I must say I'm fascinated to see how well it does for you. When you say that we have seen all the 'useful' hollies, I assume you mean there is one, or perhaps more, that we have *not* seen."

I admitted that this was the case. The previous summer, I said, I had found seven specimens of a dwarf variety on one of the more remote islands in the bay.

"A true dwarf?" Professor Kynaston asked. "Are you sure they weren't merely examples of an ordinary variety that had been wind-pruned?"

"Oh, no," I said. "They're true dwarfs, all right. They're not exactly common in this part of the country, but you do run across them sometimes."

"I should like very much to see dwarf hollies growing in such an exposed location. Couldn't we secure a boat of some sort and treat ourselves to a pleasant outing? I need hardly say that I'd be glad to pay all the necessary expenses. After all, I *am* permitted to make field trips, and, for that matter, we might turn it into a combined field trip and picnic for the four of us. You'd enjoy that, wouldn't you, Sybella?"

Mrs. Kynaston assented with a stately nod. A day on the water, she said, would be extremely pleasant. "Are you fond of punting?" she asked me, and I had to explain that in New England we have very few streams with the requisite shallow bottom and slow current.

"Salt-water sailing is what we go in for mostly in these parts," I told her. "In fact, I was about to say that it wouldn't be any problem at all for us to get hold of a boat to take us out to Tern Island, where I found the dwarf hollies. I have an eighteen-foot sloop. The *Nonpareil* was built for racing, so she isn't the last word in comfort, but I think I can promise you she'd run us out to Tern and back without any trouble."

"Splendid!" the Professor said. "And I assure you we shan't complain if your cushions and back rests aren't precisely designed for sybarites. A day on the water will be a treat in itself."

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There are no back rests on the *Nonpareil*, and while I suppose the hard, canvas-covered mats on the locker seats are technically "cushions," I myself never ventured to apply so voluptuous a term to them.

"We have friends who live near Henley," Mrs. Kynaston remarked. "When we go to them for Whitsun, as we always do, we so enjoy watching the holiday pleasure craft on the Thames. Literally a *multitude* of boats going up and down the river!"

I couldn't quite see the connection. With a certain nervousness, I began to wonder whether the Kynastons really understood what sort of day they were in for. Already several small incidents had suggested to me that Professor Kynaston, although wonderfully informed about trees, was perhaps a trifle vague about matters *not* pertaining to trees. As for Mrs. Kynaston, I still hadn't been able to form a clear idea of what she was really like.

My wife, who loves to sail, said with regret that she wouldn't be able to go with us, because she had a one-thirty appointment at her hairdresser's. "Which is just as well, for your sake," she remarked to Mrs. Kynaston. "Four's a crowd on the *Nonpareil*. I'd better hurry out to the kitchen and start fixing you a picnic lunch. My husband will probably want to make an early start if he's taking you as far as Tern."

Professor and Mrs. Kynaston begged her not to supply them with anything more elaborate than a single sandwich apiece and perhaps a piece of fruit. After English austerity, they said, they simply couldn't seem to accustom themselves to our "largish American luncheons."

Apologetically, I told my wife that she had better put in at least two sandwiches for me and a thermos of hot soup. "I'll go down to the wharf and start bailing out," I told her. "Will you dig up some sweaters and denims for the Kynastons? And see if you can fit them out with old sneakers from that pile in the cupboard under the front stairs."

Turning to Professor Kynaston, I explained that shoes with leather soles are more of a drawback than an asset on board a sloop. "If we sail in about half an hour, we can make Tern Island by eleven-thirty or twelve, see the hollies and have our lunch, and be home by four-thirty or five or thereabouts," I said. "Tern is the southernmost island of a group that's strung out like a necklace. Getting there takes time and involves a good deal of tacking, as a rule."

The Kynastons turned up at the wharf while I was still bailing, and to my amazement I saw that they were dressed as if for a garden party. The Professor was wearing white flannels, and Mrs. Kyn-

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aston had changed into a somewhat fluttery blue silk crêpe, quite stylish shoes, and a fussily elaborate hat. Each of them had a rolled waterproof tucked under an arm, and the Professor was carrying a picnic basket. Mrs. Kynaston was also equipped with a furled umbrella, which I somehow couldn't quite visualize her putting to any really practical use on board the *Nonpareil.*

" Didn't my wife say *anything* to you about clothes ? " I asked, aghast at beholding their attire.

" Oh, yes ! " they assured me, and the Professor said amiably, " She was solicitude itself, but we rather thought we'd be a bit more comfortable in some of our own things. We knew you wouldn't mind."

" I'm afraid I didn't do too good a job explaining what our day would probably be like," I said, aware that I had failed to dispel their Henley-inspired notions about boating. " If the wind freshens, as it's almost certain to do, the return trip will be downright rough ! "

Seemingly undismayed, the Professor remarked to his wife, " Apparently our outing will be more in the nature of a day at Cowes."

The prospect clearly gratified Mrs. Kynaston, who said, " *We* shan't mind if it's a bit chippy-choppy. In fact, I rather hope it *will* be."

" It may be considerably more than that," I said.

" Neither William nor I will be sea-sick," Mrs. Kynaston said with dignity as her husband and I helped her step down into the *Nonpareil.* " We enjoyed the *Queen Elizabeth* immensely, coming over."

" You must remember that we are a maritime people," Professor Kynaston reminded me, not altogether jocosely.

I said I hadn't been thinking so much of sea-sickness as of their getting drenched. " The only extra clothes I've got stowed away here are a couple of old sweatshirts, and at best they'll be dampish, I'm afraid," I said.

" You must stop worrying about us," Professor Kynaston said evenly as he and his wife established themselves on a narrow locker seat. " After all, we have our macks." They were sitting bolt upright and studying the rigging with interest.

Surrendering to the British, as so many others before me have done, I went to work raising the mainsail. Then I cast off, and presently raised the foresail. One of the things that had brought about the present complication, I decided, was the phenomenally warm Indian-summer weather we were having. Like a good English June, it had, as a matter of routine, connoted white flannels and garden-party hats to the Kynastons, in connection with genteel

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outdoor pleasures. As I steered the sloop out into the gently ruffled bay, I made a point of chatting informatively about Indian summer. Also, I explained about jibing, the theory of the centre-board, and the functions of the various sheets.

" Boating seems to be rather more work than I had supposed," Mrs. Kynaston said, raising her eyebrows. " I must adjust some of my preconceptions."

" I confess I had no idea the pastime was so complicated," the Professor agreed.

We were sailing through a channel, a sort of marine avenue defined by red buoys and black " nuns," and we were gaining speed.

" But delightful," Mrs. Kynaston added. She took a deep breath of the delicious air, and exhaled it with an expression not unlike that worn by the men in cigar ads. " It really is, you know, William."

" As soon as we pass the last nun, I'm going to jibe," I said. We sailed on for a bit, and then I called out, " Ready ? Ready to jibe ? "

" Oh, quite," Professor Kynaston said.

" Such amusing words," Mrs. Kynaston remarked to her husband. " The ' nuns ' are the floating black canisters, I believe Mr. Parker said, but I forget his exact definition of ' jibe.' "

" *Duck !* " I shouted.

The boom swung around, and by a miracle Mrs. Kynaston escaped a concussion. Missing her scalp by perhaps an inch, the boom swept her hat off her head with the precision of a football player executing a neat kick-off.

" Oh, God ! " I groaned. " Are you hurt ? "

" Not at all," she said with great calm. " Merely dishevelled, I should imagine."

" I'm terribly sorry. And your hat is gone forever, I'm afraid."

" It never was a great success at the University, actually," she said. " And my husband always felt there were rather too many grapes around the brim."

In open water, the *Nonpareil* suddenly began to demonstrate her special talent for skimming the surface like an uninhibited gull.

" I say, Sybella ! " the Professor exclaimed, suddenly lapsing into the phraseology of an excited schoolboy. " Isn't this ripping ! "

Unexpectedly, we cut through a medium-large wave instead of winging our way over it. All of us received a thorough drenching, and Mrs. Kynaston in her once-fluttery blue crêpe looked much the most waterlogged.

I said wretchedly that this was what I had been expecting. To my astonishment, Mrs. Kynaston abandoned all her reserve and cried, " Glorious ! Oh, William, isn't this superb ? " The

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Professor agreed with her fervently. "And now that we're wet all over, there won't be any point in our putting on our macks," she added, as if she had a real hatred of mackintoshes.

"You'd better let me dig out those old sweatshirts," I said, but the Kynastons scorned the suggestion. The Professor said, "Your-er-Indian sun will soon dry us nicely," and it did, but only briefly. We had many more deluges of spray before the day was over.

As we skirted Mackerel Island, at about eleven o'clock, and as the low nubbin of land known as Tern Island became visible, Mrs. Kynaston announced that she was ravenous. She had crawled onto the gunwales about an hour before, and was lying sprawled on her stomach, with one arm prudently hugging the mast in case of a sudden lurch. Her iron-grey hair had come loose and was flying, pennant-fashion, in the wind. Clearly, she was taking a sensuous delight in the warm sunlight, as I was doing myself. I could hardly believe that we were within a day or so of November, so delectable was this bonus weather we were having.

"Why not go ahead and have your lunch?" I said. "You needn't wait until we reach Tern. I'm sorry you asked my wife to make only one sandwich apiece for you." I fished out the lunch basket and inspected its contents. "She took you at your word, I'm afraid, but she put in two for me and some hot soup."

"When I came down to breakfast this morning, I was a reasonable facsimile of a civilized man, but I now find that I have sloughed off civilization completely," Professor Kynaston declared cheerfully. "I shall probably slit your throat and cast your body overboard, merely for two additional sandwiches and a spot of hot soup."

"There are some odds and ends in the cabin, as a rule," I said. "Can you eat things cold, out of cans?"

"I could eat a rat *saignant*," Professor Kynaston said with decision.

"If you'll take the tiller, I'll go and have a look," I said. Professor Kynaston took over, and I crawled into the tiny cabin and searched for provisions. I found a can of *chili con carne*, a can of condensed vegetable soup, and a can of hamburgers in brown gravy. There was a small Sterno outfit but no fuel. Hearing an ominous slapping sound, I poked my head out of the cabin and said to the Professor, "You're luffing. Pay out enough to fill your sails again."

"You're making the sails flap too much, William," Mrs. Kynaston bellowed, in a quarter-deck voice. "Loosen the what-you-may-call-it and recapture the wind!"

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Professor Kynaston obeyed these combined orders after some momentary fumbling, and the *Nonpareil* again flew over the water. I emerged carrying the three tins and a can opener. Already the Kynastons had done away with the small snacks my wife had fixed for them, and were doing their best not to let their glances wander towards my own rations. "Here are some oddments," I said, displaying the canned food. "If you'd like my sandwiches and soup, I wouldn't in the least mind eating one of these. Or if you think you'd like to try stuff out of a can, you're welcome to anything in this assortment."

"Why don't we share *everything*?" Mrs. Kynaston cried with the utmost enthusiasm. I found a rusted fork and spoon in the cabin, and Mrs. Kynaston, who had already applied the can opener to the tin of hamburgers, called to me exultantly, "We won't need utensils for these. They're little *rissoles*, apparently, and we can pick them up with our fingers."

I shared my sandwiches and hot soup with the Kynastons, and we all scooped out forkfuls and spoonfuls of the cold canned food.

"Magnificent!" said Professor Kynaston, wolfing cold *chili*.

"Sheer heaven!" said Mrs. Kynaston, devouring condensed vegetable soup.

"The flavour!" said Professor Kynaston, licking his fingers after plucking from the third tin a hamburger coated with congealed grease and eating the stuff with relish. "I don't know when I've ever tasted anything so delicious."

When Mrs. Kynaston had polished off a trifle more than her share of the condensed soup, she asked wistfully how we proposed to allot "the fourth little *rissole*." It hardly seemed worth while to divide it, she said carelessly. And so of course we handed it over to her. "Really quite in a class with Simpson's or Scott's," she said with admiration. "What a superb lunch you've given us! I could do with a serviette, as my handkerchief is in an extremely bedraggled state, but who cares? Could anything matter less?" She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand.

As we neared Tern Island, I said, "Pull the centre-board up, please," to Professor Kynaston, and began to do some quick work with the sheets. Very shortly, I heard a light crunching sound. "Up centre-board!" I shouted. It was too late. We hadn't quite gone aground, but the centre-board had eased into the shallow, sandy bottom just enough to serve as an anchor for us. We were perhaps seventy feet from Tern itself. "If you and I jump out and push her off carefully, we can raise the centre-board and then edge ourselves closer to shore," I said to Professor Kynaston. "If we don't, the tide will soon go out enough to ground us. I hate to ask you to help, because of your white flannels, but I'm

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afraid you've already got them wet many times over, and as far as shrinking is concerned, not much more damage could possibly be done."

The Professor said reasonably, and in a most unmandarinlike voice, "Why don't I take them off? Because I most certainly propose to do my share of the pushing." He began to unbutton his trousers. "With your permission, Sybella," he said over his shoulder, in a perfunctory aside.

She waved graciously but did not speak, being engaged in trying to drain the teaspoonful or so of liquid that still remained in the thermos, which she had tilted to her lips in the manner of a Hogarth drunkard.

The Professor leaped over the side in his shorts, and he and I succeeded in clearing the *Nonpareil's* centre-board. We then worked the sloop nearer to the shore. "I completely forgot to tell you at breakfast that you'd probably have to take off your shoes and stockings and wade ashore," I said to Mrs. Kynaston. "It wouldn't be necessary if the tide were higher, but, as it happens, it's going out. The water is freezing cold, but the sun is so hot you'd dry off right away on shore if you want to risk it."

In no time, Mrs. Kynaston, bare-legged, was wading ashore, her teeth chattering. I said earnestly that I hoped she wouldn't catch pneumonia. She seemed much amused. "I happen to be English," she said.

We spent only a few minutes on Tern, just long enough to "do" the hollies and to satisfy Professor Kynaston that they were true dwarfs and not wind-pruned specimens of a larger type. Then we shoved off and retraced our course of the morning. The Professor's seamanship showed a steady improvement and Mrs. Kynaston too became remarkably proficient. In fact the two of them took on the handling of the foresail entirely. In appearance they were by this time as raffishly unkempt as a couple of pirates out of an Errol Flynn epic. Even before mid-afternoon my guests were hungry again, but I could find nothing for them except a few broken pilot biscuits. For these crumbs they were touchingly grateful.

When we arrived at the house the Kynastons told my wife enthusiastically and with nautical camaraderie that they were going upstairs for a few minutes and that when they came down she would find them ready for a tea of mammoth proportions. "Give us enough for at least eight people," Mrs. Kynaston called down with bluff geniality, from the stair landing. "It won't be too much!"

Obviously amazed at the sea change that apparently had come over our guests my wife hurried out to the kitchen to prepare

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tea while I went to put on some clean, dry clothing, although nothing at all special. The Kynastons, on the other hand, lost no time in getting into soberly conservative outfits of the utmost correctness. They came downstairs looking much as they had looked at breakfast, except that their complexions were ruddier. I couldn't help noticing that they were wearing not only dignified clothes but a dignified manner as well.

"Now tell me about your day," my wife said, sitting down to preside at the tea table.

"It was most enjoyable," Mrs. Kynaston said sedately.

"Most," the Professor concurred with dignity, and in the mandarin voice. "I was so pleased to be able to broaden my acquaintance with your hollies. The dwarfs were well worth seeing."

"So green and glossy," murmured Mrs. Kynaston. "I should like to have one of the same sort—potted, you know—for my morning-room at home."

For several moments, I listened to the seemly crunching of buttered toast and wondered whether the whole day could have been something I had imagined. Then I remembered Mrs. Kynaston, knee-deep in icy water, saying to me with calm amusement, "I happen to be English," and I felt entirely reassured.

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PRIVATE TUITION

An organ-grinder was "playing" that piece from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* when he was stopped by an old man in a shiny black overcoat.

"Too fast," he said excitedly. "Much too fast!" He seized the handle and began turning it slowly with one hand while he conducted an invisible orchestra with the other. Having finished the piece he dropped sixpence on the organ lid and was about to depart when the organist stopped him.

"How do I know you are right?" he demanded. "I've been playing like that for three solid months."

The man in black drew himself up proudly. "Nobody can tell *me* how that should be played," he declared. "I am Mascagni."

The following day the piece was played to a slower tempo and, chalked on the side of the barrel-organ, was the simple legend, "Pupil of Mascagni."

STANLEY JACKSON, *An Indiscreet Guide to Soho*

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LOVERS' MEETING

A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The chalk-pit was full of sunshine and the murmuration of bees. Fleur flung back her hair.

"Well," she said, "in case of accidents, you may give me one kiss, Jon," and she pushed her cheek forward. With ecstasy he kissed that hot, soft cheek.

"Now remember! We lost our way; and leave it to me as much as you can. I'm going to be rather beastly to you; it's safer; try and be beastly to me!"

Jon shook his head. "That's impossible."

"Well, do your best. Look! There they are! Wave your hat! Oh! you haven't got one. Well, I'll cooee! Get a little away from me and look sulky."

Five minutes later, entering the house and doing his utmost to look sulky, Jon heard her clear voice in the dining-room:

"Oh! I'm simply *ravenous!* He's going to be a farmer—and he loses his way! The boy's an idiot!"

JOHN GALSWORTHY, *To Let*

Serenade

The wind lieth with the rose,
And when he stirs, she stirs in her repose:
The wind hath the rose,
And the rose her kiss . . .

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Accidents Will Happen!

—I am half distracted, Captain Shandy, said Mrs. Wadman, holding up her cambrick handkerchief to her left eye, as she approached the door of my uncle Toby's sentry box—a mote—or sand—or something—I know not what, has got into this eye of mine—do look into it—it is not in the white—

In saying which, Mrs. Wadman edged herself close in beside my uncle Toby, and squeezing herself down upon the corner of his bench, she gave him an opportunity of doing it without rising up—Do look into it—she said . . .

—If a man will be peeping of his own accord into things of that nature—I've nothing to say to it—

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My uncle Toby never did; and I will answer for him, that he would have sat quietly upon a sofa from June to January (which, you know, takes in both the hot and cold months), with an eye as fine as the Thracian Rodope's beside him, without being able to tell, whether it was a black or blue one.

The difficulty was to get my uncle Toby to look at one at all.

'Tis surmounted. And I see him yonder with his pipe pendulous in his hand, and the ashes falling out of it—looking—and looking.

—In vain! for by all the powers which animate the organ—

—Widow Wadman's left eye shines this moment as lucid as her right—there is neither mote, or sand, or dust, or chaff, or speck, or particle of opaque matter floating in it—There is nothing, my dear paternal uncle! but one lambent delicious fire, furtively shooting out from every part of it, in all directions, into thine—

—If thou lookest, uncle Toby, in search of this mote one moment longer—thou art undone.

LAURENCE STERNE, *Tristram Shandy*

Bird's Philosophy

The robin cam to the wren's nest,
An' keekit in, an' keekit in:
"O weel's me on your auld pow,
Wad ye be in, wad ye be in?
Ye'se ne'er get leave to lie without
And I within, and I within,
As lang's I hae an auld clout
To row ye in, to row ye in."

The Scots Musical Museum, 1797

Faint Heart

Mr. Spectator,

Here is a young Man walks by our Door every Day about the Dusk of the Evening. He looks up at my Window, as if to see me; and if I steal towards it to peep at him, he turns another way, and looks frightened at finding what he was looking for. The Air is very cold; and pray let him know that if he knocks at the Door, he will be carry'd to the Parlour Fire, and I will come down soon after, and give him an Opportunity to break his mind.

I am, Sir, Your humble Servant,

Mary Comfit.

RICHARD STEELE, *The Spectator*, 1711

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Now . . .

Time was away and somewhere else,
There were two glasses and two chairs
And two people with the one pulse
(Somebody stopped the moving stairs) :
Time was away and somewhere else . . .

The bell was silent in the air
Holding its inverted poise—
Between the clang and clang a flower,
A brazen calyx of no noise :
The bell was silent in the air . . .

Time was away and she was here
And life no longer what it was,
The bell was silent in the air
And all the room a glow because
Time was away and she was here.

LOUIS MACNEICE, *Meeting Point*

. . . And Then

Ming-Y . . . found himself in a reception-chamber vast, cool, and fragrant with scent of blossoms freshly gathered. A delicious quiet pervaded the mansion ; shadows of flying birds passed over the bands of light that fell through the half-blinds of bamboo, great butterflies, with pinions of fiery colour, found their way in, to hover a moment about the painted vases, and pass out again into the mysterious woods. And noiselessly as they, the young mistress of the mansions entered by another door, and kindly greeted the boy, who lifted his hands to his breast and bowed low in salutation. She was supplely-slender as a beauteous lily ; her black hair was interwoven with the creamy blossoms of the *chu-sha-kih* ; her robes of pale silk took shifting tints when she moved, as vapours change with changing of the light . . .

So the ninth hour passed ; and they continued to converse, and to drink the cool purple wine, and to sing the songs of the years of Thang, until far into the night . . . And at last, as she paused to pledge him in a cup of wine, Ming-Y could not restrain himself from putting his arm about her round neck and drawing her dainty head close to him, and kissing the lips that were so much ruddier than the wine. Then their lips separated no more ;—the night grew old, and they knew it not.

Author Unknown, translated by LAFCADIO HEARN

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POOR MAN'S INN

Nell spoke for the first time. "That'll learn him," she said

by RICHARD HUGHES

SCATTERED up and down the main English roads there are certain caves, barns, empty cottages, and other places of shelter that all tramps know of. You will tell them, probably, by seeing a few dirty rags hanging on bushes near: but they are surprisingly well hidden, as a rule. Once inside: more inadequate bits of rag, and tins for cooking, and the remains of the last fire: a shapeless candle-end on a bit of slate, a crust or two, perhaps, and a smell of mice.

One night in a rough spring when I was wet through to the tail of my shirt, walking in the Forest of Clun on the Welsh Marches, I left the road by a narrow gate on the right and turned into a quarry. Clun is one of the oldest oak forests in Britain: very steep, wild country: not very far from Ludlow, a curious town crowded on a hill-top round the red castle where *Comus* was first acted. This quarry was of the same red stone. Once off the road, it bends to the left: you are at the bottom of a sort of shaft, roofed very far up with dripping oak leaves, and on one side the rock caves in, leaving room for a dozen men or more to shelter on a ledge of sandstone.

I felt my way in with both hands, for the night was black enough outside. The wind roared in the trees above, and every few moments as they swayed the branches unburdened themselves of rain like a wave breaking. Then the wind lulled, and from the sheltered ledge I heard a snoring, almost as loud as of a man in a fit. Then there were steps behind me: the clank of iron on stone.

I crept my way into shelter: a voice behind me: "Whisht, who's there?—All right, Friend." A burly figure followed me in: I could hear an iron foot clink on the stone, and answered his greeting. He fumbled for a match, and struck it, but the wind blew it out. I had a glimpse of a huge body, one of the broadest men I have ever seen, queerly dressed. Behind me the other lodger snored stertorously: the newcomer felt his way past me, breathing heavily and clicking his tongue in a hollow tooth. Paper rustled.

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"Silly blighter! He's drunk as a lord. Rolled himself in newspaper, too, to keep the cold out. Guess it will serve our turn, Friend."

He stripped off the drunkard's covering (who never stirred), and must miraculously have found some dry wood in a recess of the cave, for I could hear him moving heavily about, still clicking his tongue in his tooth. Then he shielded the flame of another match in his cap, and lit a fire. Its little flames flickered desperately at first, then suddenly it blazed up, lighting the cave like a furnace-mouth, where the three of us were set like the Three Children. The flames made rubies of the nearer rain: the smoke sucked a little, battered down by the cold air outside, and wandered off towards the other end of the ledge.

The fire-lighter crouched over his fire. He was an immense man, not tall, but with long arms, a mountainous chest, and a broad, flat face like a savage, though it was more cheerful in expression. He had a knotted kerchief round his neck, and wore a sleeveless coat of lion-skin, bare arms, with raindrops still glistening on the tattoo-marks, baggy sailor's trousers, that half hid his iron foot, held up by a leather belt decorated with strips of tiger and python-skin.

By the fire he had set down a heavy bag that clinked with metal: rain-water was running out of its bottom. He blew out his cheeks, and warmed his hands, thrusting them right into the smoke.

"Whew, it's a cruel night for sleeping rough! God knows why I ever took to it. I've got a tough little circus of my own laid up in London, waiting for the money to start it and here I am walking the road like any poor blooming lug-biter. How long have you been on the road, Friend?—Look at him, now: a nice, sociable, matey sort of chap to spend a night with, ain't he?"

He picked up a small piece of rock and heaved it on to the sleeping man's stomach: who hiccoughed suddenly then went on snoring.

"Wake up, you silly blighter! Can't you see there's two gentlemen wanting to have a chat with you? Wake up! The copper's after you! It's closing time! Wake up!—Coo, I can't understand a chap like that, what drinks himself silly. Let's have a look at him."

He heaved over on to one hand, and held a burning branch over the sleeper's face.

"I know him, too: chap called Lenora: I done him down last Worcester Races. Won five pounds, he did; oh, he was roaring drunk that day! I fetched an old monkey's skull what I'd got in my pack, curio-like: I wired it on to a haddock's backbone, and

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told him it was a mermaid's anatomy. A young one. He gave me four pound for it, he did. He's been looking for me ever since, they tell me. But *I* don't care. Wake up, you skunk! Don't you remember old Bill, what sold you the anatomy? You been lookin' for me, have you? Eh? Wake up!"

But Mr. Lenora was dead to the world. Bill chuckled. "Look at that, now! Born to be hanged, he is. See them eyebrows meeting? Born to be hanged, that means. I ain't a bit religious: but I'm very superstitious, you know. Not religious, but I do believe in a bit of luck. See them bits of snake-skin? Do you think they're lucky, eh? I do. Holy, they are. Holy snake. I got them out in Malay, same as where I learnt tattooing, and the magic coffin trick. But I ain't had a bit of luck, not since. Are you married?"

"No."

"That's right, Friend; don't you be, neither. It's a dirty duck what paddles always in the same puddle, *I* say. I am."

"What?"

"Married. But I'm through with it. Look at that!"

He rummaged inside his shirt, and pulled out an old pocket-book, full of cuttings and photographs.

"See that? That's me. Slung up in chains sixty feet above-deck, in seven pair of regulation handcuffs! See all the passengers watching? I got out in four minutes, same as I said I would.—That's me as a little boy: you can guess I had a good home: white collar and all.—Ah, that's the one!"

He handed me a creased photograph of a young woman, in the conscious splendour of Sunday black, standing in front of a balustrade, one hand rested firmly on an aspidistra-pot on a fancy stand.

"Now, would you call her handsome?"

I examined it carefully. "I would."

He seemed disappointed.

"Would you? I wouldn't: not *real* handsome. Not like one of them flash girls. That's my wife! Irish girl: Irish temper too. Lumme! Lord alone knows what I wanted to do it for. We was married proper, you know: registry and all.—Nor her either! She'd got birth, and she'd got education—read easy as winking, she could. She hadn't got no business to marry a chap like me! Ought to know better, she did!"

Mr. Lenora stirred, and muttered something unintelligible that was smothered in another snore. Bill turned on him, his face all comical with mock indignation.

"Now then, you low fellaa, will you kindly not interaapt,—" he said this in an astonishingly good parody of an Oxford accent,

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"—or I'll roll you out in the ruddy rain!" he added in his own voice, and chuckled.

He clicked his tongue in his tooth once or twice, meditatively.

"But I'm through with it," he went on. "Coo, lumme, what a life!—Hallo, who goes there?"

There was a sound of more footsteps through the rain: a man's cautious plodding through the dark, and the clip-clap of a loose sole on the shoe of the woman who followed him.

"Walk up! Walk up!" cried Bill cheerily.

But the stranger was unresponsive. He was a small man, with that roundness of figure and thinness of limb that often come of having too little to eat. As he paused at the edge of the firelight he blew through his moustache so that the raindrops tumbled out of it. But the oddest thing about him was his nose: he had a nervous trick of twitching it, like a rabbit. He sat down with a grunt, taking not the slightest notice of the girl at his heels. She had pulled her skirt up to hood her head: her muddy petticoat flapped against her legs. She took equally little notice of him, and sat down, too, a little way off, swathed like a mummy, half in the firelight and half in the shadow.

"Full bar tonight, gentlemen!" Bill went on jocularly. "A pint of old and mild all round, please, Joe!—Coo, I could do with a bit of grog inside me tonight! Cruel, ain't it, Mr. Parker?"

"My name ain't Parker," said the stranger sullenly, his nose twitching. "It's Spencer. What d' you call me Parker for?"

Bill looked at him and shook with mirth. "Coo! I don't know! I can't think! Now, why ever should I go and call him Parker, eh, Friend?"

He dug me in the ribs, and went off into fresh peals of mirth.

"Don't take no offence," he went on. "I ain't a fighting man. I ain't that sort of chap. If a man wants to quarrel with me, I don't hit him; not I!"—he began to chuckle in anticipation of his little joke—"I just go up to him, friendly-like, and bite a piece right out of his bloomin' face!"

Mr. Spencer snorted.

"All right. I ain't going to have a pull out of your mug, you needn't worry!"

Suddenly he spun round with incredible swiftness, and thrust his face close up against the stranger's, pressing his own nose with his finger. It had no bone in it, and went absolutely flat like a piece of india-rubber. Mr. Spencer tumbled over in consternation.

"See now," said Bill, "that shook him!—It always shakes 'em!" he added innocently, as if it were a habit of social intercourse with him. "It shook Nell. I done it in the regist'y office.

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It shook the registrar: he told me to remember it was a solemn occasion. Coo!"

"You'd be a nice sort of chap to be married to, you would!" said Mr. Spencer, slowly and provocatively.

"So I *was*!" said Bill impressively. "But, as I've just been telling this gentleman here, I'm through with it. I left Nell, back at Oxford. Months ago that was. Mind you, I was a good husband to her."

"What were you doing in Oxford?" I asked.

"Exercising my profession! Getting out of seven pair of handcuffs, thirty-five feet of chain, and a strait-waistcoat, in four minutes, while Nell took the hat round. I got handcuffs here"—he tapped his sack—"of all the ages. I got a pair with teeth on 'em—same as was used by the Savage Romans and the Ancient Mammoths of the Bohemian Desert. I've studied 'em. See here!"

He put his hand to his capacious nose, and brought out of it a small instrument like a whistle.

"See that? That's a master-key to all the handcuffs of Europe! Studied for that, I did: made it myself."

He put it back in his nose where he seemed able to carry it in perfect comfort.

"As I was saying, we had a good week of it: they're a bit of all right, them Oxford police.—But I didn't leave her, not till she come out of the 'firmary! I was always a good husband to her: careful-like. I hung on till she was right again. Nobody can't say I wasn't a good husband to her."

"What was the matter with her?" I asked.

"Well, you see, we had a bit of a row: too many girls, *you* know. She used to get wild if I brought 'em into the house. Threaten to kill me, she used to. Only her temper, *you* know: she didn't mean nothing by it: she was a good girl at heart. I just took up the poker: not to beat her, you know, just to *learn* her: and she tripped up and broke her poor blooming ankle. Month, she was, in the 'firmary."

Mr. Spencer snorted again, and took off his boots. He ostentatiously poured the water out of them on to the fire, to see it go up in steam. Then he began to examine the condition of his feet. But Bill went on, undisturbed.

"Pretty thin time of it I had: my show was stale; oughtn't never to do it more than a week. I didn't get more than a tanner a night. Nor I couldn't change it easy. I was used to do the magic coffin trick—shove Nell in a coffin, padlocked 'ead and foot each end, then saw it through the middle. That always fetched 'em; but I couldn't do it without Nell. You can't do it with *any* girl, you see: she's got to be made that way, like Nell was.

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Nor I hadn't got my electrocuting chair: *that* always fetched 'em, but you couldn't lug it around with you. Nor I couldn't think of any new trick.

"You know how it is: when you're in luck, you can think of half a dozen new stunts; but when you're down on it, you just can't think of nothing. Coo, lumme! I remember up Llandudno way, once, I got a bit of wood, and I nailed thousands of lugworms on to it, so as you couldn't see the wood for the worms. Then I put it in a tank, and exhibited it as a marine monster, Pride of the Ocean! When the silly worms waggled, you see, they swum it about! I took pounds on pounds out of that: gate-money. Stuff in the papers, there was: 'Unknown Monster Captured at Llandudno.' The johnnie came down from the aquarium: he wanted to *buy* it. That put the wind up me, that did: I broke it up. Said I'd throwed it back in its native ocean, I did." Bill chuckled.

"He offered a reward to anyone who could catch it again. They was all out fishing, for weeks they were. Coo, lumme!

"But as I was saying, I couldn't think of nothing. I couldn't do a bit of house-breaking, 'cos I hadn't got no money: you must 'ave something, if you're going to win. I got the brains, and I got the experience, but I 'adn't got the capital. There wasn't nothing for it but fire-eating. I done it. But it's terrible hard on the kidneys, that is: I was awful bad inside. No one can't do it more than six months, even ones what's used to it. When Nell was comin' out, I 'adn't got no more than half-a-crown. So the day before, I shoves a bob into her bed, and I beat it."

"Did she know you were going?" I asked.

"*Now!* Made a scene, she would 'ave. She was real fond of me. I was a good husband to 'er. I don't suppose she's got over it yet, proper. Terrible fond, she was."

Mr. Spencer was puffing with anger: his nose twitching up and down as if he had the ague.

"That's a nice edifying little story to tell a party of strangers! Washin' yer dirty linen in public!"

"*Dirty linen?*" said Bill, in genuine amazement. "Why, I don't see—"

He paused. Mr. Spencer fidgeted nervously all over.

"Yus, dirty linen! You're as bad as a divorce court, you are! You ought to be in gaol, you did!"

The girl, sitting huddled away from the fire, was shivering, her teeth chattering with cold. Suddenly she threw the skirt back off her head: the light shone on a face of quite delicate beauty, now marred and twisted with rage. Her great eyes glittered in her

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head like fire: her lips were drawn back tightly from her shining teeth.

Bill stared at her stupidly: slowly his expression changed to one of delight and an extraordinary tenderness. "*Well, I'm—*" he began. Her hand was hidden in a fold of her dress . . . there was the sudden crack of a revolver, and then Bill pitched right over sideways on to his face.

Mr. Spencer turned towards her, seemed to tower over her.

"Whatever have you been and gone and done?" he said very slowly.

Nell took no notice of him. The passion of her face had changed to a sort of impersonal hardness: she rose on to one knee, her loose, wet hair blowing against the roof of the cave. She threw the revolver down: it glanced on a stone, and skidded down the slope to where Mr. Lenora was still sleeping—the man born to be hanged.

Mr. Spencer still stared at her fixedly.

"Crikey!" he said presently, "Crikey!" several times, with increasing emphasis. Suddenly he let out a funny little screech in the back of his throat: his eyes were starting like a pug-dog's. Then he said, "Lumme!" He caught up his two boots and floundered suddenly out of the cave, crashing through the bushes to the road. I could hear him hollering with terror as he ran, till his breath gave out.

Nell spoke for the first time: she had never taken her eyes off Bill, not for a moment.

"That'll learn him," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "He won't do *that* again!"

Then she turned towards me, the soft Irish in her voice gradually increasing.

"Stranger," she said, "this is none of your business."

"It is not," said I.

"You had better be going," said she. She did not seem to have noticed Lenora lying there with the pistol by him, but was looking at me. She was very beautiful.

I jerked my head towards the road.

"That one's gone," I said.

"He's gone, surely."

"Would you come along of me a bit?" I suggested diffidently.

"Boy, wouldn't you be frightened out of your life, to be with such as me?"

"*I'd* not be afraid!"

"Brave boy!" She spoke with a sarcasm that was shattering. It moved me to sulkiness.

"I'd—I'd not ask nothing of you."

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For a moment the strange, statuesque woman seemed to flicker into life:

"Them as don't ask, don't get!"

"Will you come, then, Nell?"

"Do you want me? Certain?"

I rushed on, heedless of her strange tone:

"You're a grand woman! *I* couldn't kill a man, like that, and not turn a hair!"

Her sarcasm flashed out again. She stared at me, slowly, from head to foot:

"No; I think you could not."

I looked at Lenora, still sleeping drunkenly, with the revolver at his side. He was born to be hanged, anyhow. If I could get the girl away, no one would ever suspect *her*.

"Wouldn't you be afraid," I burst out, "to be walking alone at night, with the memory of *that*?" And I touched the giant with my toe.

"Walking?" she said, and began to laugh: gently at first, and then like a cataract. "It's a *walk* shall I be!"

She bowed her head forward and shook with peal upon peal of laughter: suddenly flung her head up, and laughed till the quarry echoed with it: her hair came right down: her eyes streamed with tears, but still she laughed. My hair prickled on to its ends with horror.

"God go with you, you poor woman," I said hastily: "for *I* dare not!"

The rain had ceased. High up among the tree-tops the moon raced through the clouds. As suddenly as she had begun, she grew calm again.

"No," she said slowly and with great emphasis; "no, *that* you daren't."

She began to plait up her hair, over her shoulder: coiled it round her head and pinned it.

Suddenly she fell forward on the ground, scratching at it with her finger-nails, crying, "Bill! Bill!" in a little husky voice like a child's. It was not a sight I could bear. I sat there biting at the back of my hand; staring at the dying fire, the moon, anything. Then again she stood up, breathing calmly and deeply, patted her hair once or twice, and like a shadow slipped out of the cave. She was gone.

Bill sat up.

"Whisht, is she gone, Friend?—Coo, lumme, *that* shook her!" He chuckled happily.

I stiffened up where I still sat, cracking my head on the cave's roof.

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"Aren't you hurt, man?" I stuttered.

"Hurt? Lord, no!" He chuckled. "Take it from me, Friend: give a woman a gun, and she'll miss you at six inches: but give her a knife, and she'll never go wrong, never!—But *that*'ll learn her not to go killing me!" he added half fiercely. "*That* ought to be a lesson to her, eh, Friend? Lord, she was pretty near mad, she was: she loved me that crool!—You thought *you'd* go off with her, did you? Coo, lumme, what a joke! You are a caution!"

He roared with laughter, slapping his huge thighs. Then he heaved over to one side and picked up the revolver.

"'Tisn't your time yet, my friend," he said soberly enough, leaning over Mr. Lenora, whose face was twitching with some discomfort as he slept. "Though you haven't got *this* cove to thank you didn't wake up in clink tomorrow! Lumme, they'd have strung him, sure: what with his threatening me and all."

But Mr. Lenora slept on.

Bill chuckled again.

"Though I'm not saying it wouldn't be better for him if they did! It's got to come some time: you can't go against a sure sign like them eyebrows; and it would be better for his soul to be hanged when he hadn't done nothing than waiting till he had, wouldn't it, Friend?"

"You're right there, Mister," I answered conciliatingly.

But he suddenly swung round with incredible rapidity, and covered me with his gun. His cheerful face was twisted with ferocity.

"So you thought *you*'d go off with her, did you?"

"I—I—I didn't mean anything!"

"Oh, you didn't, didn't you? Going with a married woman!"

His mouth was still set like a wild beast's: but there was a gleam in his eye—and I banked on it.

"She wasn't a married woman, Mister; she was a widow!"

He burst out laughing, and thrust the revolver into his side-pocket.

"Bless you, I hadn't no cause to worry! I know Nell."

"I don't know about you," said I, "but my legs are stiff as a board with wet and cold, and there's a good moon. Let's walk on a mile or two, before dawn."

"Sure," said Bill, and swung his huge sack. Together we found our way out on to the road.

"No, Friend, as I was saying—" began Bill sententiously.

There was Nell, huddled at the road's side, half in the moonlight. Bill touched her. She was quite dead, stabbed through the

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heart. Bill's face went grey: his lip dropped.

"Lumme," he said, "I hadn't counted on that!"

In a sudden temper with him, I burst out into Welsh: "*Yr hên llofrudd i ti!*" I cried. "*Yr hêen . . .*"

Then he dropped on his knees, caught up her staring head in his arms.

* * *

ANSWERS to TINKER, TAILOR on page 37

1. *Rahab the Harlot, in the Old Testament Book of Joshua.*
2. *Little Billee, who narrowly escaped being despatched at a meal by gorging Jack and guzzling Jimmy, and was rescued by Admiral Napier, K.C.B., in W. M. Thackeray's poem "Little Billee."*
3. *George, speaking to Lennie, in "Of Mice and Men," by John Steinbeck.*
4. *Polyphemus, one of the one-eyed Cyclopes, whose encounter with Odysseus is described in Homer's "Odyssey."*
5. *Dick Dewy, the tranter's son, in "Under the Greenwood Tree," by Thomas Hardy.*
6. *The Grammarian, in "A Grammarian's Funeral," by Robert Browning.*
7. *Sinbad the Sailor, in "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments," author unknown.*
8. *Orpheus, in Shakespeare's song, "Orpheus with his lute . . ." to whose music "plants and flowers Ever sprung."*
9. *The suitor in the traditional ballad, "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington." When the girl followed him to London he failed to recognize her in her "puggish attire."*

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across: 5, Kettle. 8, Sheep-pen. 9, Pyramid. 10, Loser. 11, East Ender. 13, Southend. 14, Nagged. 17, Net. 19, Ken. 20, Parody. 23, Artistry. 26, Lay figure. 28, Upper. 29, Mineral. 30, Overtake. 31, Census.

Down: 1, Psalms. 2, Pea soup. 3, Apprehend. 4, Heaven. 5, Keystone. 6, Twain. 7, Loiterer. 12, Ada. 15, Antiquary. 16, Paradise. 18, Eye-glass. 21, Bar. 22, Stop-gap. 24, Remove. 25, Yorker. 27, Frets.

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The Milk-White Dove

"Be careful, my darlings," she said. "We don't want a scene"

A CONVENT once gave a splendid dinner to celebrate the golden jubilee of an old nun, and not only were many clergy invited, but the Bishop himself.

After a pontifical high mass—very grandly celebrated with cloth-of-gold vestments, a motet sung by the sisters, and a sermon preached by a canon—his Lordship and the Reverend Fathers were sitting round a glistening table sipping sherry and preparing to finish a first course of delicious chicken *consommé*. Nuns in their cleanest habits moved about with quiet grace—as nuns do; and Reverend Mother herself was in attendance, waiting for the moment when the roast goose, asparagus and green peas should be brought in and she should be the first to fill the Bishop's glass with rich red burgundy.

Outside in the convent yard something akin was happening, for who should have slipped out into the yard but the old jubilarian herself, little Sister Mary Rose, and there she was, with special permission from Reverend Mother, giving the animals a feast. As she moved about among the dogs and cats, the pigeons and the rabbits, wearing her small crown of flowers for the day, she looked more like a little girl than an old lady of eighty.

At about the time the Bishop was carving the first slices from the goose and Reverend Mother had lifted the lid from a crackling dish of roast potatoes, all the animals outside were also preparing to eat. The convent dog, and two reverend visiting dogs, had plates of juicy scraps before them. The pigeons were wheeling down on corn especially thick in tares and maize. The rabbits were half-hidden behind cabbage leaves. The chickens were guzzling hot mash; and the goat was chewing a large swede.

Last of all, and the old nun's special pet, was a milk-white dove—a creature all of softness, who had been reared in the convent since her fledgling days and now herself had taken the veil.

As she cuddled in the hollow of her mistress's hand, and the bent old fingers stroked her head, this gentle dove took those fingers in her slender beak and covered them in caresses. Then delicately from the cupped hand she ate millet and crushed biscuit.

When it was time for Sister Rose to go (for she must be back before the Bishop proposed her toast), the old nun held the little dove up and whispered: "I must go, dear little Sister Dove. Keep

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the others happy for me, won't you ? " And the dovelet fluttered to the ground and began to walk among the guests seeing that all were served.

There were others present whom we must mention. Four cats, for instance, and a family of mice. Some youngsters from the latter were wandering dangerously close to the cats and the dove tip-toed up to them and said : " Be careful, my darlings, we do not want a scene. Even convent cats are cats ! "

Another guest was a certain rat, an animal, it appeared, who gave himself some airs, for he moved about among the pigeons tasting their corn and bumping them out of his way. With the chickens, too, his behaviour was no less pushing, and one of the hens—a matron of powerful presence—was heard to remark in a fruity cluck : " Why must that dreadful animal be invited ? Everyone knows he has made his money as a black-market butcher ! "

The milk-white dove took pity on this unattractive creature and, full of her usual sweetness, engaged herself to wait upon him—for he seemed to be quite shunned. She stood quietly by and attended to his wants.

" Would you like some potatoes, sir ? " she cooed. " Or what about a drop of milk ? The cats are busy on their fish-heads."

The rat listened to these suggestions without a hint of gratitude, betraying by his rough and greedy manner a secret annoyance that this slip of a bird, with her poise and her grace, should be so utterly beyond his grasp. He began to itch with the desire to humiliate her, and his coarse mind became filled with nasty thoughts.

" The high-falutin' little baggage," he muttered. " I'm damned if I can't bring tears to those delicate eyes, or ruffle that soft white face. See if I can't ! "

With that, his mouth full of bread, he bawled in a pawky tone : " How comes it that our pretty young dove-nun has never been given in marriage ? "

All the animals stopped eating and looked at one another in embarrassment. Even the old goat, who was thought to have a very thick skin, glared into his half-finished swede, and seemed almost ready to butt.

The milk-white dove however, very simply replied : " Perhaps, Sir, it is because I never met you ! " And just as the rat was swelling his chest with arrogance, she turned to the company like a queen and splendidly added : " Isn't that something to thank God for ? "

At that moment a burst of clapping rang out from the dining-room, and glasses clinked—the Bishop was giving the toast.

PAUL ROCHE

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GRAND SALON

"Have you heard the scandal about the Duchesse de Bourgogne?" she began hopefully

by HELEN TODD

I WAS IN THE WRONG ONE.

It really was careless after what she'd said. I wasn't usually unkind or discourteous. Although naturally an egoist, I have found it more comfortable to follow my grandmother's advice and not hurt other people's feelings when it wasn't absolutely necessary. Now, just by coming into the middle one instead of the Second on the Left I'd caused a tragedy.

I was so ashamed I didn't dare come out. It was ten minutes now—I really must collect the courage to come out and face Mlle. Thiery. One couldn't just sit there doing nothing. Even making animals out of the toilet paper got boring after a time. No hope of her coming to the door and rebuking me for my mistake, even if I sat there all morning. She'd be far too hurt. It was a second offence.

As soon as I came out it was as I'd expected. The little old lady, the Lavatory Attendant, didn't say anything, didn't even look at me reproachfully. She just sat in a corner weeping quietly.

It was obvious that, when one had ruined another human being's social success, apologies would be useless for at least a week. So I just crept away resolving to bring some pink carnations for the Second on the Left next time I came.

Pink carnations would be the appropriate peace offering. They would suit the Second on the Left to perfection. It was reserved for the more effeminate type of intellectual—pure eighteenth-century. The walls were painted in a very pale mauve. The paper was of varying shades of anæmic greens and yellows, and there was always a vase of flowers, usually rather faded ones, placed at the back of the seat. This made it a little difficult to sit down especially if one were in a hurry.

The middle one was exclusively for romantic temperaments. It was painted in clear primary colours. On the walls in large red letters were uplifting extracts from Wordsworth's poems. On the door was a card which, instead of the usual "Please do not throw any refuse down the drains," had an imposing notice in

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Gothic type inciting one to improve one's mind and soul even while the body was engaged on more urgent business. The other four compartments were reserved for special types of temperament.

Mademoiselle Thiery had to talk to everyone before she could tell them which lavatory to enter. Not only talk to them but ask them leading questions—the kind of thing which would force them to commit themselves. Make them reveal in a word or two whether or not they were romantic. The first time I paid a visit to Mlle. Thiery, her lengthy cross-examination almost caused a disaster. So, trying to say something definite, I rashly committed myself to being eighteenth-century. This was stupid because in fact I wasn't. I had been a month before, but now I was just *ultra sub ultra* Romantic. I wasn't quite sure what that was, but I had a feeling it would be the right kind of emotion to portray.

The Public Lavatories were now the only recreational amenity in Thronville, a small provincial town two hundred and fifty miles from Paris. I had come with the intention of writing about provincial life in an *ultra sub ultra* Romantic manner, but instead I spent most of my time paying visits to the Public Lavatories in order to talk to Mademoiselle Thiery and make her recount the tragedy of her life.

It was indeed very sad. When she was only thirty-five her father had died, leaving her an orphan with a small income. Her friends had tried to urge her to accept a job at the cash desk of the local grocer, but she had scornfully refused it. Indeed as the offers of employment increased she became more and more haughty and aloof. She even declined an offer of matrimony from the butcher. She had other plans.

For the past three years Mademoiselle Thiery had read everything she could find about Madame de Pompadour and the great courtesans of her age.

From her reading she had developed a violent ambition to have a salon, where the most famous philosophers of the time would come together and brightly discuss the failings of their mistresses. The most intellectual of them would defray the expenses of keeping up the salon, and sleep with her. In bed they would discuss the discoveries of Newton or the relativity theory of Einstein.

She would become known throughout France as the source of inspiration of the geniuses of the age. No really great poems would be written without mentioning the kind of fan she carried at her last magnificent salon.

Since this was the twentieth century, she had little hope of a duel being fought for her sake. But they would send a special representative from Hollywood to take a topical event of her sitting on the knee of a world-famous celebrity offering him a radish. There

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would be a large headline in the American newspapers, *Thiery Reanimates The Radish Rage.* This would be rather useful, because if she were getting tired of the celebrity she could just throw him over and manage to finance the interval, until the advent of the next admirer, with the handsome present of a million francs from the radish combine.

But first she must get to Paris. One couldn't have a salon in an out-of-the-way place like Thronville.

She surprised her father's trustee by suddenly demanding the whole of her capital in a lump sum. Having obtained it in spite of the protests, she set out to the station with nothing but a small suitcase under one arm and Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* under the other. When she got to the *Gare du Nord* she didn't quite know what to do next. Still she thought she'd better leave the Laclos and the suitcase in the cloakroom while she hunted for the appropriate salon.

At last she found a house in the *Faubourg St. Germain.* The rent for three months was three-quarters of her income. She was rather shocked. It was much more expensive than she had expected. She hadn't particularly wanted a whole house—anyhow not such a large one. But the agent had said if she wanted the salon she'd have to have the rest of the house as well. So she decided to be slightly extravagant and take the house. Some admirer would naturally be keeping it up before many days.

She'd been in Paris a week now. It wasn't exciting. The salon was empty and so was the house. She didn't know how one began collecting intelligentsia for a salon. Really she didn't know how to start collecting anyone in a strange town.

It was getting rather dreary being alone in that very large house. Especially at night. All the elaborate *Louis Quatorze* furniture was becoming terribly dusty. She didn't see what one could do about dust when it accumulated on such a large area. She just moved around from room to room. She'd used up seven beds now, but there were ten bedrooms. Still it would be wiser only to use up nine. One ought to be kept clean and ready for the first admirer.

It was becoming rather a problem how one collected the appropriate intelligentsia. She tried sitting in the *Luxembourg* regularly from nine to ten on a seat near the merry-go-round. She assumed that the greatest poet of the age would come and sit on the same seat. An old lady slightly deaf, three nursemaids and six babies had come and sat on the seat—no one else.

She decided she'd have to open her salon the following Sunday.

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Since there was no one else she'd better ask the old lady and one of the nursemaids. First she'd have to make conversation with the old lady.

"Would you mind telling me the time?" she began. The old lady was apparently rather deaf. It took her at least ten minutes to understand what she was saying. Still, she was getting a little more friendly trying to make her hear. She even got up quite close to her ear and shouted. She felt she was perhaps sufficiently intimate, when the old lady had understood about the time, to ask her to tea.

"Will you come to tea next Sunday at five o'clock?" she screamed. Even then she hadn't heard. "Come to my house in the *Boulevard St. Germain* at five o'clock next Sunday," she yelled.

"Oh, I see you want some stockings darned," said the old lady politely. She was very pleased and smiling. "However did you know I took in mending? Certainly I'll come and fetch them at five o'clock on Sunday."

It was obviously useless trying to explain. She'd just have to let the old lady come, thinking she was fetching some mending. It would mean explaining to some of the great poets that she was really an interesting character. But at the moment she was undergoing a reaction against contemporary fashion. She believed everyone should dress so as to express his soul.

The nursemaid was easier to manage. She began by admiring the two large babies—twins. Only eighteen months old, but wonderfully advanced for their age. Then she just asked the nursemaid to come to tea, *Boulevard St. Germain.*

"Ah, do you work in one of those large houses?" the girl asked. "Parlourmaid or cook?"

"I am the mistress of the salon," said Mlle. Thiery with dignity.

The nursemaid didn't quite know what that was. She thought it was probably much lower than either cook or parlourmaid. It would be more tactful not to inquire. If it was too low she'd just have to make some excuse and come away after five minutes.

"It won't derange if I bring the babies?" she inquired.

Mademoiselle Thiery was a little startled. She was sure that Madame de Pompadour had never had babies to tea with her lovers. They would be even harder to explain than the deaf old lady's clothes. But she would have to have them. The nursemaid couldn't come without. Anyhow, it had given her an idea. Perhaps the nursemaid could bring someone really interesting.

"Bring anyone else you'd care to," she suggested.

"Well, I might bring my young man," said the nursemaid. "He's not very handsome. He's really only a temporary arrangement, but I should think he'll last until next Sunday."

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"Is he a poet or a musician?" asked Mlle. Thiery.

"Well, neither professionally, but—"

"Of course it takes a long time to get anything published," said Mlle. Thiery hopefully. "But does he show any tendencies that way?"

"Well, his eyes do look rather poetical when he's going to kiss me," said the nursemaid.

"Do they become quite so when he actually does?" inquired Mlle. Thiery.

"He hasn't yet," she said. "If he doesn't before next Sunday I really think I shall have to give him up."

"Do wait till Sunday night," Mlle. Thiery said urgently.

That was excellent, a real about-to-be poet was coming. He would do quite well to start off with. During the afternoon she would have to arrange to sit on his knee. Of course the nursemaid would be broken-hearted. But Madame de Pompadour hadn't minded breaking a few women's hearts.

It was now necessary to collect a musician or two.

Mlle. Thiery walked down the *Rue Madame*. A man with long hair was playing a rather squeaky violin. He put out his cap as she passed. She emptied the contents of her purse into it. He was a little startled.

"You are a great musician?" Mlle. Thiery inquired.

"I don't know about that, I'm chiefly hungry," he said.

"Ah, I see you've fallen from fame. Just temporarily out of favour with the *grand monde*. Never mind you must come and perform in my salon next Sunday. When the great ones hear you there, you'll soon get famous again. You will come to tea—*Boulevard St. Germain*—next Sunday at five o'clock?"

"I'd rather have some tea now," he said.

"No, but you really must come then." Mlle. Thiery was firm.

"All right," he agreed. There would probably be some valuable silver in those old *St. Germain* houses.

"Bring some friends if you'd care to," said Mlle. Thiery.

He agreed to bring along his mate.

"Is he a poet or a musician?" inquired Mlle. Thiery.

"He doesn't do anything special. Just drinks quite a lot."

"Ah, an eccentric!" she was delighted. "Disapproves of a routine existence?"

She walked a little way up the street. There was a large white building on the left marked Y.W.C.A. A notice in large black type said, "Social gatherings Mondays and Fridays. All young women with Christian outlook invited."

She wasn't sure that she was a young woman with a Christian

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outlook or that young women with Christian outlooks were likely to be *demi-mondaines*. She wasn't quite sure what a *demi-mondaine* was, but she knew they were necessary company for great philosophers. But as she didn't know where to get any others she'd have to go to the social gathering tonight to try and collect a few of them.

It was half-past nine. She'd just got home from the Y.W.C.A. gathering.

The young women she'd met in the intervals of a lot of singing hadn't really seemed quite the right kind of people to go with philosophers. Still, as she'd have to have someone, she'd asked the four who seemed least concerned about the future of their souls. They were all English and rather ugly. Their ugliness would have to be attributed to their aristocratic blood. She felt she'd read somewhere that that was one of the results of being legitimate among the English upper classes.

Sunday afternoon had come. There was a loud ring at the door. It was a pity there wasn't a footman. She'd have to answer it herself and explain that she thought it was better not to have anyone in the house who could possibly make scandal. Servants had really no respect for *les grandes passions*.

It was the four young women from the Y.W.C.A. They walked upstairs stiffly one behind the other. They went into the salon on tiptoe and sat on the edge of four chairs all in a row. When she looked at them Mlle. Thiery had a kind of intuition that it might be better to put off discussing the servants and *les grandes passions* until they'd had their tea. The next minute she was glad she had.

"The French domestic problem must be far greater than the British," said the one at the end of the row in a sad squeaky voice with her eyes fixed on the accumulation of dust.

"Have you heard the scandal about the Duchesse de Bourgogne?" said Mlle. Thiery, hopefully making bright conversation. It was going to be all as it should. They'd only got to the first scene of the great gathering, the *demi-mondaines* discussing scandal before their lovers arrived.

"We do not permit our minds to dwell on the evil deeds of others," said the first young lady sadly.

"We keep our minds untarnished."

"Pure," said the third.

"Unsullied," said the fourth.

That wasn't quite as it should be. *Demi-mondaine* conversation ought to be rather dashing.

Thank goodness, there was the bell.

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" Have you got the stockings ready, dear ? " said the old lady coming into the hall.

" Hush," said Mlle. Thiery. " You must come in and have some tea."

" The Duchesse de Bourgogne," said Mlle. Thiery, introducing the old lady to the young women from the Y.W.C.A. " We had just been discussing you," she continued, hoping her voice sounded flippant. " Hadn't we ? " she added turning on the four young ladies.

" Discussing you," she screamed as the old lady hadn't heard.

The four young ladies blushed, one after the other, then looked the other way.

The door bell rang.

" The Duchesse will entertain you," she said to the four young ladies. Then, flippantly, " But you'd better not ask her with whom she spent the night. Probably Paul the first half and Jean the second," she whispered loudly as she left the room.

Fortunately the old lady did not hear. But the four young women were scandalized. They had never before even seen a woman who lived in sin. They determined to leave as soon as their hostess came back. In the meantime they moved over to the other side of the salon so as to be as far away as possible from contamination with vice.

The nursemaid came in with the young man and the babies. The young man was tall and thin, he wore glasses, and had an earnest expression and a lot of spots on his face. The four young ladies got up to say good-bye. But the bell rang again.

It was the musician and his mate. " The greatest musician and philosopher of the age," announced Mlle. Thiery.

" Lawks, it's a disorderly beggar," said the nursemaid. Mlle. Thiery must be even lower class than she'd thought. She dropped the babies on the chair, seized her young man's arm and held it firmly. One needed protection against the lower grades of society.

Mlle. Thiery thought the best way to start a *grande passion* with a musician was to stir his simplest animal emotions. She had read somewhere that the maternal was the strongest and simplest emotion in all human breasts. So she took one of the babies and handed it to the musician.

" Now we will all have tea," she said with determination.

" Tea in the same room as that tramp," said the nursemaid indignantly, " certainly not."

" I'm sorry, but we really must be going," said the four young ladies together. " We're really very broad-minded, but after what you've told us about that woman we—"

In the musician's arms, the baby chuckled proudly.

" Remove the child from that man's arms," said the nurse-

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maid firmly to her young man. The young man felt rather frightened. He wasn't naturally heroic and there was an angry look in the musician's eye. "Would you mind very much if I took the child?" he said in a trembling voice.

"Mind! I should think I wouldn't." The musician was obviously indignant. "I seem to be all wet."

The young man took the baby and held it tenderly upside down. The nursemaid seized it and retired to the opposite end of the room.

Mlle. Thiery knew that this was the moment when she would somehow have to manage to sit on the poet's knee.

Unfortunately, he was standing.

"Let's all sit down," she said. The scandalized young ladies had got up to go, but they were so used to doing what they were told that they just sat down again automatically.

They all sat down round the tea table. There was an awkward silence, occasionally interrupted by gurgling from the nursemaid and the baby in the corner.

The silence continued. The four young ladies sat bolt upright. The musician's mate occasionally spat and the duchess had fallen asleep. Mlle. Thiery knew she'd have to do it suddenly or she wouldn't be able to at all. She jumped up and threw herself on to the knee of the nursemaid's young man.

"Darling," she said in a loud, strained, high-pitched voice.

The four young ladies fell off their chairs one after the other, crying "Shame! Shame!" slowly and deliberately. The nursemaid dropped the baby and, screaming, rushed over and seized her young man by the hair.

In the meantime the musician and his mate collected all the silver teaspoons and available small ornaments and crept quietly out of the house.

Exactly what had happened after that Mlle. Thiery could not quite remember. All she knew was that her face was rather scratched and most of her hair pulled out by the nursemaid.

She woke up in bed an hour later with the four young ladies round her. She had apparently fainted. Their modesty forbade their telling her exactly what had happened.

She stayed in Paris until the lease of the house ran out, but she shut up the salon. She knew now that it was just the mixing that had caused the disaster. One shouldn't try to mix different temperaments.

She determined to get a book on the different classes of temperament and never mix them again. If necessary she would read a good deal of poetry, both English and French. The books that described the mixed gatherings of the eighteenth-century ladies were obviously inaccurate. One just couldn't mix in a Duchess with ordinary *demi-mondaines*.

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When the three months were up she went back to Thronville; she had just enough money left for her fare.

The relations were very much shocked at the sight of her without any of her capital. But one kind old aunt said she might come and live with her. When the aunt died, the neighbours took the situation into their own hands.

The Town Council had just opened a new Public Lavatory—and as she wasn't fit for any other job the neighbours insisted she should accept the post of Lavatory Attendant.

Before she had seemed listless and rather sad. But when she took over the lavatory she brightened up.

Obviously a public lavatory was just as good as a salon. The one thing to do was not to mix people. As long as one separated different temperaments all would go well.

I was really rather proud to be the only person in Thronville to whom Mlle. Thiery had ever confided the details of her past life. No one else knew what had happened in Paris. The neighbours just concluded she had had an unfortunate love affair and had gone slightly wrong in the head. Unfortunately, I was unable to take her the pink carnations. The day after going into the Wrong One, I had a sudden call to Paris.

When I returned to Thronville, six months later, the first thing I did was to visit the Public Lavatories, but Mlle. Thiery wasn't there. A very brisk young woman put my penny into the slot of the wrong door. She didn't seem to mind in the least that it was the Wrong One. Inside it was all changed—plain and whitewashed.

I made inquiries about Mlle. Thiery. She was dead.

"You see," said the brisk young woman, "the Town Sanitation Commission ordered all the Public Lavatories in the town to be whitewashed for the sake of the public health. After they had whitewashed her lavatories, Mlle. Thiery was never the same again. She just seemed to pine."

As I was an individualist with a strong feeling against regimentation, I was pleased to find a case illustrating so well the tragic results of interference by public organizations.

It consoled me a little for the loss of the *grande courtisane*.

* * *

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN

Some of the most dangerous experiments in marriage are conducted on the kitchen stove.

F. P. J.

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My Friend Joseph

by NEIL PATERSON

FIRST: how I met him.

I had gone to Manchester to see my father. To ask my father for money. I wanted the money so that I could marry Lizzie and save her from a fate worse than death. Yes, that was how I thought of it. I was twenty-one.

"Tell me about her, then," my father said, sitting stiff-backed behind his desk. "How old is she, and what about her family?"

He had me there, of course.

"She's nearly eighteen," I said.

"And her family?"

"She can't help her family. And anyway, they're mostly dead."

"What does she do?"

"Well," I said, "she's a sort of a kind of a maid. To Jacobus. Jacobus, the boxing manager, and Mrs. Stevens. Mrs. Stevens is his housekeeper." I knew how it sounded. It sounded terrible. "But you don't understand," I said. "She's different. Really she is, Dad. She's a wonderful girl."

"Son," my father said, "the world is full of wonderful girls, especially the first one." As he spoke he placed his hand on a sheaf of papers, raised his first two fingers, and drummed *con spirito*, as we said at home. I knew what this meant. It meant that the subject was closed.

"Then you won't help me?"

"No, son," my father said.

I went out and walked the streets. I walked for a long time, along streets that I did not know and would not know again, and finally I walked into a fairground. I saw the notice that said *Murphy's Famous Boxing Booth*, and I paid my sixpence and walked under the notice into the tent.

I stood on my toes and, looking down an avenue of cloth caps,

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He came bounding down the stairs to meet me; I saw every jutting bone in his face, and I saw his eyes. "I am unhappy about my lion," he said, "but I came to tell you about another thing. It is beautiful and a surprise . . ."

saw a large ugly white man hit a large ugly black man on the chin. It was a notable punch. It travelled only a few inches, but it wrenched the negro's chin up from his chest, spun him half round, and sent him crashing like timber.

Guss, my boss in Sports, once told me always look at their heels, so I looked then at the negro's heels, and saw that they were flat on the boards and that his toes were up. "If their heels are flat," Gus said, "that's that." And so it was of course.

"The Pole the winner!" the referee said. "The killer-diller!"

The crowd did not like it. They had paid for ten rounds and got only one. They thought they had been cheated and they said so, with emphasis. They were still booing when the negro was carried from the ring, and they saved a special raspberry for the winner as he ducked through the ropes and, grinning, nodding, and shaking hands with himself, made for the canvas flap marked Dressing-room.

He appeared to be pleased with his reception. He actually seemed to think that he was popular. I watched him till he disappeared. Then, smelling a story, I elbowed across the tent to the partitioned-off section, raised the canvas flap, and peered into the Dressing-room.

The negro lay almost at my feet. Two men in sweaters were working on him, slapping his face and hands, while a third sluiced him with water from a bucket. The Pole was over in the corner farthest from me. He was surrounded by a jostling mill of small men of the kind you always find around a boxing booth, and he was busy lifting these spivs two at a time and banging their heads together.

It was hard to know just what was going on. Everybody, except the negro, was shouting at the top of his voice, and everybody, especially the Pole, was in a very bad temper. The little rat-faced referee had a restraining hand on the elastic waistband of the Pole's pants, but that wasn't stopping the Pole. When he saw me he dropped his victims and came at me, and there was no time for me to go. He came the direct way, stepping over the negro's torso, and he came fast.

"You see William?" he demanded.

"I don't understand."

"William is his bird," Ratface said. "His magpie."

"You see her?" the Pole said, grabbing my coat lapels.

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"No," I said.

"For the love of Mike," Ratface said to the roof. "Will somebody please find William!"

Well, that was the first time I met the Pole.

When I got back to London there was a dearth of news, and I slapped out a bit about Murphy's Famous Boxing Booth. Gus let the stuff through, and I had two small pars in each of the evening editions and one in the morning paper.

Next day I had a phone call from Jacobus.

"Hullo," I said. "Hullo, Mr. Jacobus." I cleared my throat to catch hold of my voice and waited. I was thoroughly scared. I thought, of course, that he had found out about Lizzie and me. I thought he knew it was me who had kept her out late the night before.

"Listen," Jacobus said. "Somebody in your paper wrote about a Pole. What I want to know is this. Is he good, this Pole? I mean *good*."

"He's wonderful," I said. "He's sensational, Mr. Jacobus." Now I did not think that the Pole was so very good. When I spoke I did not think of the Pole at all. I thought only of keeping Jacobus sweet, and I just opened my mouth and said what I knew he would like best to hear.

"You think he's worth looking at, boysie?"

"I certainly do, Mr. Jacobus," I said.

And that was how Jacobus came to sign up the Pole. That was the start of it all.

I WENT along to the Gym. (Jacobus's Boxing Academy) the day after the Pole arrived. I went in the hope of catching a glimpse of Lizzie, but I let it be known that I had come to see the Pole. I stood and watched him at the heavy bag for a few minutes, then I stepped across to the plywood office to pay my respects to Jacobus.

"Well, how do you like him, Mr. Jacobus?" I asked.

"All right," Jacobus said. "But he don't talk. I paid good money for him, and what I say is I got the right to have him talk to me. You tell him that, boysie. Tell him he's got to behave hisself when he's here and talk when he's talked at. So far he don't talk to nobody at all, not even the boys, but you tell him that, like I said, boysie. Maybe he'll listen to you."

So I talked to the Pole.

"Hullo," I said. "How are you getting on?"

The Pole scowled and hit the bag with a double left-hook.

"You like it here?" I asked.

The Pole hit the bag again, one-one-two, and he hit to hurt.

"How's William?" I said.

The Pole stepped back and looked at me. He had stopped scowling, and was wearing what I took to be an eager and a friendly look, but it hadn't done his face any good at all. I don't know if there are words to fit the Pole's face. It was very big and very, very ugly. When you first looked at it you got the impression that

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it had more bones in it than necessary, that these bones were bigger than human bones, and that they were not in the places where they ought to be. But after a bit you got accustomed to the idea of the Pole's face, and when you looked at it you didn't see it. You saw only his eyes. His eyes were O.K. They were no different from anybody else's eyes, and I think they were brown.

"You know William?" he said.

"Not exactly," I said. "But I know about him. Did you ever find him?"

"No," the Pole said.

That was the sum total of words spoken. I did not think that I had done very well, but Jacobus was impressed. "You made a hit," he said. And later, when he had thought it over, he called me into the office.

"Listen, boysie," he said, "do me a favour. You come and talk to him as often as you can, and some night you take him out. Will you do that for old Jacobus? There's no one else can start him talking, and it gets you down, that frozen puss—just take a look at it. I seen ugly pans, but I never seen the like a that; you're his friend, you come along and take him out some night, make him laugh. I'll pay expenses."

"I'll be glad to oblige you, Mr. Jacobus," I said. I always said yes to Jacobus. I knew that he was harmless. I knew that he was cheap and crooked and contemptible, and I used often to lie in bed at night and work out the way I would treat him the next time we met. The way I would treat him would be like dirt. I decided on it definitely, yet when I got face to face with him I always remembered that he was Lizzie's guardian, and that he had Rags Gorman behind him (that especially) and I always got a tight feeling in my stomach, and I always went out of my way to be very polite and agreeable, and I nodded my head and said yes, Mr. Jacobus, no matter what Jacobus said. "Certainly, I'll take him out, Mr. Jacobus," I said. "What's his name?"

"God knows," Jacobus said. "I ain't thought one up yet. Now you take him to a cinema, see. Nothing flashy. And, boysie, no eats. He gets that at his place. Board and lodgings. Comprehensive. Good solid food. I got that all fixed. Just some little cinema place."

I called for the Pole at the Gym. at six the following evening.

Lizzie knew that I was due, and came down the stairs with something for the garbage tin, but Jacobus was there, and she would not look at me although she waggled her skirt, meaning affection.

I was ashamed to walk with the Pole because of the way everyone stared, and I was angry with Lizzie for not having looked me once in the eyes. I didn't say a word, and I thumbed the Pole into the first cinema I saw. The main film was a marriage comedy with Melvyn Douglas and a blonde, I don't remember her name. It was a very funny film in parts, and I had to laugh, and when I laughed the Pole laughed too. He had a terrible laugh, like something in an opera.

When it was all over, I walked the Pole home. I tried to make conversation in basic English and the Pole listened gravely, saying

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" Please ? " and " Yes, thank you," these at the wrong times, and precious little else. We finished the last half-mile in silence, and I was mighty relieved when we came to his lodgings. I thumbed out the door to him in case he hadn't the sense to know where he lived.

" Well, so long," I said.

The Pole took my hand, shook it hard, and bowed.

" Thank you, pet," he said.

I didn't have to think that out. It was straight from the film. Melvyn to his wife. *Thank you, pet.* It certainly rocked me back on my heels. I could not think of an appropriate reply, and I was determined not to laugh. I merely said, " So long, then," and turned away. I looked back from the street corner and saw that the Pole was still standing at the door. When he saw me looking, he raised his hat and bowed again, and I giggled and shot quickly round the corner.

Thank you, pet !

That big gorilla.

Oh, it amused me. It gave me a fine laugh, but it also made me realize that the Pole was a human being, and now, when I look back at it, it does not seem at all funny. It seems sad.

THE Pole, registered as Joseph Hamilton (Hamilton was Mrs. Stevens's middle name : Mrs. Stevens was Jacobus's housekeeper), K.O.'d his first two opponents in the third and first rounds respectively, and Jacobus, who believed a pound in the hand was worth ten in the offing, rushed him into a match with Al Kid Williams of Cardiff, who was good. I didn't like it at all. I had grown fond of Joseph. I had started him off on night classes, taken him twice to the circus, walked him interminably round the Zoo. I had got used to the big cuss, and I didn't want to see him cut to ribbons. I knew that this so-called fight could only be a massacre, and I would have stopped it if I could. But I couldn't.

The contract was signed and the bills were up before I even learned of it. *Al Kid Williams* v. *Big Joe Hamilton.* It was to be a ten-round supporting bout at Blackfriars, and the Pole was given what Jacobus described as " an extensive preparation." This included beef tea twice daily and a punch-drunk sparring partner. Joseph, reeking of embrocation, showed me his muscles and his secret left jab. He seemed perfectly content with his new existence, and I was fool enough to think that he was settling down.

Then, six days before the fight, he disappeared.

I met Lizzie on the evening of that day in the Public Library where we had a standing date, Wednesdays, and she told me about it out of the corner of her mouth. Joseph had not turned up at the Gym. that morning, his bed had not been slept in, his landlady had not seen him since the previous day.

The boys were all out searching. They were combing the parks and the river-banks. They had divided the city into sectors, and in their various sectors they were taking in all the pubs, the police stations, the hospitals and the mortuaries. Jacobus was up to high

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doh, and when last seen was sitting purple at the telephone, working through the directory. Lizzie wanted me to think where Joseph could be, but I could not think, and I did not want to waste our precious time together. I jockeyed her round to the Archæology bay.

Nine days out of ten we could count on getting the Archæology bay to ourselves, but this had to be one of the tenth days. An old man in a black reefer coat was seated on the ladder stool taking notes. Lizzie and I pretended to look at the books. We brushed hands and exchanged glances. We waited for a long time for the old man to move, but the old man sat on like a fixture, and at last Lizzie said desperately with her eyes that she had to go.

"Not unless," I said.

"But him."

"Him or no him," I whispered. "I mean it."

Lizzie bit her lip, considering this. "All right," she said at last.

So I kissed her.

That was the first time we ever kissed in public. The old man was not watching us, and maybe it is not strictly correct to speak of a single unmindful old man as public, but that was how I thought of him. I thought, "This is the first time I have ever kissed her in public," and because of that thought that kiss became a very special one, and even now, after an interval of more than ten years, I exactly remember it.

Lizzie was wearing a new and unfamiliar perfume, and I have no doubt that it was a very cheap perfume, that she had too much of it on, and that it smelled terrible, but it smelled like a million dollars to me, and it still does. Just before she slipped out of my arms she jerked in closer than she had ever been before, holding very tightly, and when she did so her breasts jellied and took up a new position against my chest. It was a moment of excruciating beauty.

She pushed me away very soon, but I caught at her hand and would not let her go. I had a question to ask her. It was a very important question, and I asked it every time I saw her.

"Lizzie," I whispered. "What about Rags Gorman?"

"What about him?"

"You know, Lizzie. Has he been at you again?"

"He hasn't been near the house for a week."

"Truly?"

"Cross my heart."

"Thank God," I said. I was mightily pleased. I was light-headed with relief. I felt as brisk and jaunty as a bee, and for the time being I forgot all about Joseph and Joseph's strange disappearance.

Next morning Jacobus was in the office at nine-thirty. Later, when Joseph was winning fights, he was Jacobus's boy, now he was my thattaty-that Pole. Jacobus was very high. He was talking in terms of the front page. He wanted posters and photographs and headlines, and he wanted them *now*. This was not my class of business, so I took him to Gus. I doubt if it was Gus's class of business either, but Jacobus could never have guessed that. Gus

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picked a cigarette off the back of his ear, lighted it carefully, put his hands on his stomach, and listened. Gus was fat and old and cynical, and nobody ever would stampede Gus.

" Is this the gorilla you told me about ? " Gus said to me. " This Pole ? "

" Yes, Gus."

" Well, we'll do what we can, Mr. Jacobus," Gus said.

That wasn't enough for Jacobus, though. Jacobus wanted a nation-wide search for the Pole. He wanted sandwich-men. He wanted front-page photographs and finger-size headlines. Jacobus wanted the moon. He talked quick and fast and very big, and as Gus did not interrupt him he got louder and bigger and more and more important. He got so important that he quite forgot himself and even went so far as to say that he would offer a reward.

" How much ? " Gus snapped, quick as a ferret.

Jacobus shut his mouth with a click and subsided to his usual size. " How much ? " he said warily. " How *much ?* Well, just say a reward. You don't have to mention the exact cash. Leave that to me. Say, you boys don't mebbe think I'm a piker, do you ? I'm no piker. No, sirs ! " And he snatched a wad of greasy notes from his pocket and slapped it on the desk. " Money's no object with Jacobus," he said. " Just take a look at that." But we had time only to catch a glimpse of the wad before he swooped on it, two-handed, and thrust it back into his pocket.

Well, we put a photograph of Joseph in the sports page and ran a feature story, *Missing Heavyweight*, and one or two of the other papers carried a similar story, but nothing came of any of them, nobody wrote or rang Jacobus to say that they had seen the Pole, and so one day passed and half of another ; then, on the evening of the next day, Saturday that was, I walked out of the office door right into Joseph's arms. (Harry the doorkeeper told me afterwards that he had been hanging around for hours.) When I say that I walked into Joseph's arms I mean just that. He picked me up nose-high, shook me till I rattled, and shouted gleefully across the inch that separated our faces.

" Come home," he said, grinning. " Home with me."

I tried to question him, but it was no good. Joseph had room for only one idea at a time, and when it was an urgent idea like this one he just plugged it, and kept on plugging it.

" Home," he shouted, giving me another playful shake. " Home. See John ! "

So I went home with him. So I saw John.

John was seated in a cardboard box in the middle of the Pole's bed. John was a bird. I learned afterwards that he was a valuable Abyssinian Blue-winged Goose but I did not know that at the time. He was a medium-sized greyish bird with bright smoke-blue wings, and he squawked. When I took a couple of steps into the room, he stood up and beat his wings at me. The Pole *chk-chkd* at him, lifted him and put him on his shoulder, and John sat quiet.

I stared at them and they stared back at me, unblinking, and I

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swear they both had wide grins on their incredible faces. I gave up, and sat down on the bed.

Jacobus said he had always suspected that the Pole was mad. Now he knew for certain. "After the Williams fight I'll throw the big ape out on his ear," he said. He did not say this to me. He said it to Mrs. Stevens in Lizzie's presence, and Lizzie told me. "But meantime I got to keep him from getting lost again, and the only way to make sure of that is to have him here in the house with us."

"Sleeping?" Mrs. Stevens said.

"Sleeping," Jacobus said.

"And the bird?" Mrs. Stevens enquired.

"The bird, too, I suppose. It's only till the fight. Only for a couple of days."

"I'll have you know, Mr. Jacobus," Mrs. Stevens said, "that I'll have no bloody bird in my house. And that, Mr. Jacobus, is final." Mrs. Stevens always called Jacobus Mr., and Jacobus had to call her Mrs. too, even in bed. That was the sort of woman Mrs. Stevens was. Exceedingly proper. Jacobus had taken her on as housekeeper in Lizzie's mother's place when Lizzie's mother died, and Mrs. Stevens had never forgiven Lizzie, and never would, for being the daughter of her predecessor. She had so strong a sense of propriety that she even thought it indecent that Lizzie and she should be sleeping under the same roof, and she said so several times a day.

She was a big, red-haired woman, handsome enough, I suppose, with an outstanding bosom and a wide muscular mouth which she used from morning to night, mostly on Lizzie. She was at pains to tell everyone that she did not wish Lizzie any harm. All she wished was that Lizzie was dead or settled in an institution or teamed up with Rags Gorman. Rags Gorman the bookie, who, only a few years ago, had been hawking rags in the streets and who now wore a coat with an astrakhan collar and financed all the racketeers in the district, Jacobus included.

It was Mrs. Stevens, not Jacobus, who kept throwing Lizzie at Rags Gorman's head. It was Mrs. Stevens who had first got the idea that Rags needed a "housekeeper" and that Lizzie was just the girl for the job. Give Jacobus his due, he didn't much like this idea. He never actually got the length of opposing it, he was too scared of Rags Gorman, and I guess he was scared of Mrs. Stevens too, but he played for time. He said, "Wait till she's eighteen," and he came right out in the open over the new clothes that Mrs. Stevens wanted to buy Lizzie for bait. He argued for a week, and in the end he said, "All right. The costume. But not the fancy underclothes."

Mrs. Stevens said the underclothes were the most important of all. She kept on at him about it, and each day when I saw Lizzie she told me how it was going; it was like a running commentary on a fight, with Jacobus always backing away, ducking and weaving, and Mrs. Stevens chasing him all round the ring but unable to land a decisive blow.

Lizzie wanted the underclothes, of course, but I didn't want her to have them. I couldn't sleep at nights and I prayed like I never

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prayed for or against any other thing that Lizzie wouldn't get those underclothes, and she didn't. Jacobus finally stood his ground. He said "No." Every now and again when he got really cornered he said no to Mrs. Stevens, but for every time he said no he said yes a hundred times or more, and even when he insisted on getting his own way he made a point of giving Mrs. Stevens a bit of her own way too, to keep her sweet. Like over Joseph and the bird, for instance.

Joseph was duly installed in the spare bedroom (Jacobus). The bird was locked in the loft over the Gym. (Mrs. Stevens).

The day before the Williams fight Gus called me to his desk and put his finger on a paragraph in the evening paper. This paragraph stated that a bird, a valuable Abyssinian Blue-winged Goose, had disappeared from St. James's Park.

"'Any person having any information,'" Gus said, reading, "'please communicate with the Keeper of St. James's Park or with any police station.' That person, my boy, is you."

It always was me when there was trouble and the Pole was in it. Well, I waited till after the fight. It was this fight which put the Pole on the map, because to everyone's amazement (especially Jacobus's) he won in the fifth round, knocking out Al Kid Williams with as vicious a left uppercut as even Gus had ever seen. I waited till the morning after the fight, and then I tackled Joseph about the Abyssinian Goose.

I was very severe. I gave him a long lecture, in the course of which I told him in a dozen different ways that it was wrong to steal. I kept it very simple. I said that John was not Joseph's bird: John was the public's bird. And so on. "So you've got to take him back to where you found him," I said finally.

"Why?" Joseph said.

I began all over again. I took it in steps. Each short sentence was a step, and at the end of each step I said, "Do you understand?" and each time Joseph said, "Yes," so I worked up to the climax and said firmly, "So there it is. You have to take him back to the Park, Joseph."

Joseph fidgeted and hung his head.

"Why?" Joseph said.

This might have gone on for a long time if I had not hit on a simplification. "Joseph," I said, "I think you know about the King, don't you?"

"Yes," Joseph said, bowing.

"Well," I said, "John belongs to the King."

"God Save the King," Joseph said.

There was no more argument. That same night Joseph and I took a ride up West to St. James's Park, and some time around midnight the King got back his goose.

JOSEPH'S next escapade was far more serious.

It took place in September, after Joseph had beaten Tiger O'Malley and Vince Hammett, and while Jacobus was busy edging

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him into line for a crack at the British title. I was mixed up in all his troubles, but unfortunately I did not take them seriously. I had my own troubles at the time. Rags Gorman was beginning to put the screw on Lizzie, and I was half-crazed with worry; I was sleeping only an hour or two a night, and I was negotiating desperately for a job on a Union paper. If I got a job on a Union paper they would have to pay me a living wage and I could marry Lizzie then and cock a snook at Jacobus, and Rags Gorman too.

I thought endlessly of ways and means to land this job, I just hadn't time to waste on Joseph, and I have to admit that I never really bothered about him or his affairs until after the killing, and then it was too late, of course, nobody could do anything for him then.

When Jacobus told me about Joseph's new pet I flatly disbelieved him. I thought he had been drinking.

"You're joking, Mr. Jacobus," I said. "Surely you must be joking!"

"Do I look like I'm joking?" Jacobus said.

He didn't. He looked like a man who is having trouble with his blood pressure. His face was purple, there were veins throbbing on his forehead, and his lips hacked and sawed at each other.

"He's got a lion all right," he said, nodding.

He was making a great effort at self-control. He spoke with only a small part of his voice and dropped each word separately, like a penny in a slot. "A live lion," he said. "And what's more, he's got it in my loft, and he's up there with it now."

I saw that I was expected to say something, perhaps even to do something. I said helplessly, "Where did he get it, Mr. Jacobus?"

"He says he found it."

"Where?"

"I think," Jacobus said, showing his teeth like a rat, "that he found it on a bus."

That was Joseph's story, and he stuck to it. I tried him hard, but he would tell no other. He was scared, but resolute. I talked to him like a Dutch uncle. I told him he could not possibly keep a lion, and I told him why. Joseph fixed his eyes on a spot several feet above my shoulder and shook his head at it. "This lion is a dog," he said.

I consulted Jacobus. "He says it's a dog," I told him.

"He's a liar," Jacobus said. "It's a lion and nothing but a lion. You see it."

So I saw the animal. It was a lion all right. I don't know a lot about lions, and I was content to see this one briefly through a chink in the loft door, but at a guess I would say it was about a year-old lion. It hadn't quite filled out; nevertheless, it was an ugly customer. It was the size of a big Alsatian dog and certainly lion enough to do damage.

I talked to Joseph till I ran short of saliva. He listened politely, and when I had finished he said, as far as I could make out, that he would do anything on earth for me, yea gladly, anything else, but he would not give up the lion.

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"I love this lion," he said.

That was probably true. I knew by this time that Joseph had a great capacity for loving all God's creatures, and I had to admit that it was possible that Joseph really did love this lion, as much perhaps as I loved Lizzie, although in a different way of course. I did not know what to say, and, not knowing, I got angry and argued. I should have known better than to try to argue with Joseph.

"You can't possibly love a lion. Be sensible," I said. "The lion is one of the fiercest of all the beasts. It's a man-eating carnivore. It eats human beings. Do you understand that?" I made the motions with my mouth. "Eats them."

"This lion has a soft mouth," Joseph said.

"No lion has a soft mouth," I said. "Think of the danger, man." I thought of it myself.

"This lion has a soft mouth and there is no danger," Joseph said.

I pointed out in elaborate detail just how much danger there was.

"Not with this lion, Robert," Joseph said. "And this lion's nice soft mouth."

I got mad then, and I spoke in a way that I had never spoken to him before. I spoke to hurt, and I did hurt him. I was savage and sarcastic. I really let myself go, and for good measure I threw in a home truth or two that was not strictly to the point. Joseph hung his head and trembled like a monstrous, miserable child. I couldn't go on shouting at him. I checked myself and clapped him on the arm. "Now, Joseph," I said gently, "be sensible."

He raised his head and looked at me, and his eyes were like a whipped dog's.

"You'll get over it, Joseph," I said.

He shook his head. He sagged.

And then the idea hit him. It hit him quite visibly, like a kidney punch. He straightened up, his face jerked to life, and he thrust his hand to his mouth and pulled out his new plate of artificial dentures, a legacy from the O'Malley fight.

"See, Robert," he said, brandishing this plate at me. "No danger with my lion. My lion has false teeth, like me!"

There wasn't much you could do with a clown like that.

I went down to the Gymnasium and told Jacobus what the Pole had told me. Jacobus didn't think it funny. He threw a newly lighted cigarette to the floor and screwed it into shreds with the heel of his patent-leather shoe.

"I'll fix him," he said, simmering. He lifted his foot and looked at the remains of the cigarette in a sudden new passion. "The big suching so-and-so," he said. "I'll fix him, see if I don't."

Jacobus did not fix the Pole, however. At least not immediately.

The truth is, Jacobus was afraid of the Pole. The Pole never spoke to Jacobus, and when he looked at Jacobus he scowled. I didn't blame Jacobus for being scared. If the Pole had scowled every time he looked at me I would have been scared too.

Well, Jacobus waited.

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He had good reason to wait, because just at this time he was engaged in a very delicate piece of fiddling. The British Boxing Board of Control was about to examine the question of Joseph's nationality and had summoned Joseph and Jacobus to appear before it at the end of the month. Jacobus had got documents from Rags Gorman's lawyer which purported to prove that Joseph was British, but all the documents in the world would not be enough if Joseph himself chose to be awkward. (*Unco-operative* was the word the lawyer used.)

Now Jacobus knew perfectly well that, if he took Joseph's lion away from Joseph, the odds were that Joseph would be extremely unco-operative. The result would be unfortunate. The Board would decide that Joseph was not eligible to fight for the British title and he, Jacobus, would lose a nice fat purse. In the circumstances he could not afford to be on worse than scowling terms with Joseph.

He therefore decided, according to Lizzie, to sit tight and do nothing at all about the lion—*meantime*. He merely bought Mrs. Stevens a fur cape, presented the Pole with a reinforced bar and padlock for the loft door, and settled down to wait till the British Boxing Board of Control gave their decision. "By the Lord God," he swore, "I'll fix him then."

"What's he going to do?" I asked.

"Tell the police," Lizzie said.

The Board met on the last day of September. The stewards asked Joseph questions on which Joseph had not been primed, and Joseph could not answer these questions.

"Although he's pure British," Jacobus said, "the truth is, he don't understand English so good."

After discussion the stewards decided to examine Joseph with the aid of an interpreter, and the meeting was duly adjourned for three weeks. During these three weeks Jacobus signed a contract (provisional on the Board's decision) for a twelve-round championship elimination fight at Harringay between Joseph and Jackie Wilson, the official contender; and sometime also during these three weeks Joseph, spruced and nervous, came to the office to consult me on a personal matter of great importance.

We talked in the corridor outside the Reporters' Room.

"I have troubles," Joseph said.

Joseph's troubles were small beer compared with those of everyone around him. Joseph's troubles were purely financial. He wanted more money for the coming fight. He told me this in a very roundabout way, and while he spoke he jigged from one leg to the other and raised his eyes only as far as my knees.

"I want a lot of money," he said.

"How much?" I asked.

"Twenty pounds."

"Let's get this straight," I said. "Do you want twenty pounds more than you've been getting or twenty pounds in all?"

"All of twenty pounds," Joseph said. "In my hand."

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His eyes crept up and touched me warily in the face. "Is it reasonable, Robert?"

He was perfectly serious. I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. I asked him what money he had been getting from Jacobus.

"A five pound," Joseph said. "Each fight a five pound. I want twenty. Is it reasonable?"

"My God," I said. I just couldn't believe that even Jacobus was as mean as that. I stared helplessly at the Pole, and he fidgeted and dropped his eyes back where they had come from. I realized that he was waiting for me to tell him whether his request for twenty pounds was reasonable, and I realized also that I had not yet heard the whole of this story.

"What do you want the twenty pounds for?" I asked.

"To buy a cow."

"A what?"

"A cow," Joseph said. "The butcher says I give twenty pounds I get a cow. A whole cow. Dead."

"You mean a carcass?" I said. I began to understand then. "The body of a cow. You want to buy the body of a cow for your lion, is that it?"

"The body of a whole cow," Joseph said. "For twenty pounds. Therefore I want twenty pounds. Is it reasonable?"

"It is reasonable," I had to say.

"Then you come with me," Joseph said, "and speak also to Jacobus, if you please."

So I went with him.

When Jacobus heard what Joseph had to say his eyes got very shifty and he said, "Yes, yes, yes. All right, I said yes, didn't I?"

"I put the rest into gilt-edged for him," he said to me. "He wouldn't know what to do with it, so I save it for him. I put the whole lot into gilt-edged." He was still off balance, for he actually brought out his case and offered me a cigarette. "But boysie," he said. "That's not for printing in your paper."

I had the guts of a cockroach.

"No, no, of course not, Mr. Jacobus," I said.

I LEFT Joseph at the Gym. and boarded a number 13 bus at the corner of the street. I was about to go upstairs when I heard Lizzie's voice and, looking round, I saw her racing across the road from the Gymnasium. She ran like a little girl in a hurry, using the whole width of her skirt, her legs showing high-up, and her unbuttoned raincoat streaming from her shoulders.

The bus was already under way.

"Hey, Mac!" I said to the conductor. "Just a minute, please." I grabbed Lizzie by the elbow and hoisted her on to the platform, and Lizzie said, "Phew! Thought I'd missed you," and leaned for a moment, panting on my chest.

The people in the downstairs were staring, so we went up top. It was quiet up top, and we had the back of the bus to ourselves.

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" I phoned," Lizzie said. " But they said you weren't at the office. I had to see you."

" Something's happened ! " I said, bracing myself.

" Certainly has," Lizzie said. " You'll never guess either. Something pretty terrible. Rags Gorman came last night and they left me alone with him and I had one bit of a time, I can tell you."

I had a landslide in my stomach, and I guess something must also have happened in my face.

" Keep your shirt on," Lizzie said. " I didn't let him get his hands on me, if that's what you're thinking. No, Robert, it was worse than that."

" Worse," I said. " *Worse !* "

" Worse," Lizzie said, nodding. " He actually wants to marry me ! It's not just a line either. He really and seriously wants to marry me. He said it in front of Jacobus and Mrs. Stevens before they left us alone. He said he would come back tomorrow night for his answer, and they've both of them been at me ever since. Jacobus is mad at me for still calling him Mr. Gorman to his face, he's all for it now that Rags is talking marriage, and Mrs. Stevens, you know what she's like, it's been nag, nag, nag, Rags this, Rags that—nothing but Rags all day long ; what a gent he is and what a compliment it is to have a really important kind of gent like Rags actually wanting to marry me. In church, too, Mrs. Stevens says. Rags never said nothing about church to me, but Mrs. Stevens swears he said it to her. ' Your own mother never had a wedding in her life,' Mrs. Stevens said.

" You know her. You know how she goes on about that. ' And you—your own mother's daughter . . .' *etcetera*—all that dirt she rakes up—' here's you with an offer from the richest man in the district, a real gentleman, a book-maker, and not only he wants to marry you, but in a church too ; and look at the house you'll have, and the money, and the respect, folks touching their caps to you in the streets and nobody'll dare not to ; my God, it makes me certainly wonder. You bitch,' Mrs. Stevens said, ' you don't deserve it.' "

Lizzie stopped for breath, let her head fall limply on my shoulder, and said, " Oh, Robert dearie, I've had a terrible, hell of a day ! "

We sat on the top of that bus for a long time. We went all the way to the terminus, and half of the way back, and we talked continuously, but I don't know that we said very much. I remember I was all for getting married straight away. I said we had to, now. Lizzie said how could we, would I just please kindly tell her how we possibly could when I wasn't even able to keep myself in cigarettes. It was an old argument, and it went on and on.

Lizzie was the practical one, and when she was being most practical I always saw a deep strain of idealism in her, deeper than any I possessed, and I always loved her very dearly. I was willing, no, eager, to take a chance on the gutter. But Lizzie wasn't. She knew it too well. She knew what the gutter did to you, and she wasn't going to let it do that dirty thing to me or to the nice clean feeling we had between us.

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I tried to be masterful.

I told her that I wasn't going to stand for any more nonsense. I had made up my mind what we were going to do. We were going to get married.

Yes, *married.*

After we were married I would take her up north to my home, and she would live with my father and mother till I could afford to send for her. I said that once my mother got to know her she would love her, and I said that I knew Lizzie would love my mother too, and I made it all sound very convincing, so much so that I almost believed it myself. But Lizzie didn't. She gave me a calm, wise, female smile and shook her head.

She said decisively, "The only thing to do is to tell them to their faces that I'm in love with you. They'll leave me alone then. I'll just tell them the truth, and if they don't like it they can go jump in the river."

We finally agreed on that.

"After all," Lizzie said, "all they can do is get mad at me."

This was not strictly correct. They could, and certainly would, try to prevent her from seeing me again, and they might also bring pressure to bear on me. I reckoned that henceforth I would be a marked man. I would have to watch my step, keep to the lighted streets. I had no illusions about Rags Gorman. I feared him almost as much as I hated him, and I had a great respect for what I thought to be his methods.

I put my arm round Lizzie's shoulders and held her very tight. "Don't worry," I said, lying. "There's really nothing to worry about." She felt extra small and brittle, and I loved her unbearably. "Darling," I said. "Oh, darling, I'll make this up to you some day, I swear I will."

"It's O.K.," Lizzie said. "Really it is. All this is much worse for you, Robert, than it is for me." And she raised her face to mine and gave me a smile that hit me in the chest and hurt. She was magnificent.

"*I'm* not worrying," she said.

THE next day was the longest I have ever lived through. Lizzie was to phone in the evening. She was to slip out and ring me whenever she got rid of Rags Gorman, and I sat waiting by the office phone for three interminable hours, from eight till eleven p.m.

A crowd of the boys came in then and sat down at the long reporters' table, and I just couldn't take their bright talk. I sat for a little with my arms on the table and my face hidden in my arms, but I couldn't help raising my head each time the phone rang and the boys guessed that I had a date and started ribbing me, and I felt some sort of wild hysteria coming on. I had to get out. I had to get to Lizzie. I left the office at a run, jumped onto a number 13 at the traffic lights, and got off opposite Jacobus's Gymnasium fifteen minutes later.

It was then exactly twenty-two minutes past eleven, and there was nobody about.

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I climbed the yard gate and, keeping to the shadow of the house wall, tiptoed up the flight of stone stairs that led to the kitchen door. I don't know exactly what I meant to do. I hoped to see Lizzie, but if I did not see Lizzie I think I meant to hammer on the door and ask to see Joseph. If Joseph was not in I would ask for Jacobus. Somehow or other I would get into that house, and, once in the house, I would find out what had happened to Lizzie.

I peered through the glass panel in the kitchen door. A glimmer of light came from the fire in the range, and I saw that the room was empty.

I tried the door.

The door opened, and I stepped inside.

The kitchen led into a narrow hall, flanked with doors. I had never been in the house before, but I knew something of its arrangements from Lizzie. I held my breath deep inside me, and edged across to the room which I thought to be the parlour.

As I reached it another door was flung open, Jacobus's voice rattled out into the hall, and a broad band of light slid across the wall and exposed me. I closed my eyes in a kind of convulsion. When I opened them I saw Lizzie standing there in front of me, her hand on her throat. I breathed again and took a step towards her. She wheeled round and jerked shut the door of the lighted room, grabbed my sleeve, pulled me a few paces down the corridor, opened another door, and thrust me in.

"Are you crazy?" she said in the dark. She sounded angry.

"I don't know," I said. "I suppose I am. Lizzie, are you all right?"

"Of course I'm all right. Why shouldn't I be all right? What's the matter with you?"

"Rags Gorman?" I whispered.

"He's been and gone." She giggled, and I knew then that she wasn't angry: she was just strung-up, like me. "You'll never believe it. Joseph . . . listen, Robert! . . . Joseph threw him downstairs."

"Joseph what!"

"Threw Rags downstairs," she said. "Yes, he did, and broke his wrist for him too. So now Joseph's gone, of course, bag and baggage. And the lion's gone too. You know about the Board, don't you?"

"The Board?" I said, dazed.

"The Boxing Board."

"Oh, was that today?" I said. "I'd forgotten. Today's been such a crazy day. No, I don't know. What happened, Lizzie?"

"They decided Joseph was a foreigner of unknown nationality and they said he couldn't fight for the title. Jacobus was raving mad about it. He was fair hopping. He said Joseph botched the whole thing, and when he came home he phoned the police about the lion, and a special truck came up from the Zoo and they took the lion away.

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" Joseph didn't know about it. He was at his elocution class, and when he came home Rags Gorman was here; he had just arrived. We were in the parlour, Rags and me, and we heard Jacobus screaming. You should of heard him, something terrible, he was screaming his head off, and Rags and me went out on to the landing to see what was wrong, and the Pole had Jacobus by the throat, up this high, his feet off the ground, and he threw Jacobus right down the stairs. He picked up Rags and shook him like a rat and threw him down the stairs too, and when he threw *him* down the stairs he broke his wrist for him."

I felt the firm rim of an object behind my knees and sat down. It was the bed. I had a hold of Lizzie's hand, and when I sat down she had to sit down too. If I had realized it was Lizzie's bed I probably would not have sat down on it, but I don't know, I might have, I was in a flat spin and capable of almost anything.

" Old Joseph ! " I said.

" Shh ! " Lizzie whispered, tensing up suddenly and digging her nails into my wrist. " Listen ! What's that ? "

I listened for noises in the house, but all I heard was the loud beating of my heart and a soft friction sound that seemed to come from Lizzie's knees.

" It's only your stockings rubbing together," I said.

" It must be the way my toes are," Lizzie said, " on the floor." She rearranged her legs, but they didn't stop shaking. I sat holding her hand. I could feel the beat of the blood in her finger-tips, and I was very conscious of her trembling legs. After a little I began to tremble too.

" You oughtn't to have come, Robert," Lizzie said softly.

" I had to," I said. " I had to see that you were all right. Thank God you are all right, Lizzie. You must have had an awful time."

" Oh, that," Lizzie said. " You don't know the half of it yet. You see, I told Rags Gorman I couldn't ever marry him. I said I was in love with somebody else, and when he pestered me to say who it was, do you know who I said ? I said Joseph. I knew that Rags and Jacobus were so mad at Joseph over the Boxing Board that they just couldn't get any madder, and so I said it was Joseph I was in love with." And she giggled happily. " What do you think of that ? Wasn't that clever of me, sugar ? "

" Wonderful," I said. I felt a great surge of relief and an even greater surge of love. I pulled Lizzie to me—she came very easily—and we lost our sitting balance and toppled full-length on the bed. It was a very beautiful and terrible moment, and when I kissed her it was even more so.

I took a grip of myself. I put my hands flat on the bed and took the weight of my body on my arms. " I'll have to go," I said.

Lizzie didn't say anything. She just breathed on me.

" Lizzie ! " I whispered.

" U-huh ? "

" What if somebody comes in, Lizzie ? "

" Nobody'll come in," Lizzie said.

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"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," Lizzie said. "So long as you're here you're safe. It's when you try to leave that they might catch you. Now that you *are* here you'll just have to stay, that's all. I mean till they go to bed."

"But, Lizzie," I said. "Do you think it's proper?"

Lizzie put her arms up and folded them firmly round my neck. "Don't be silly," she said.

So I stayed.

I stayed for a long time, because, as Lizzie said, we might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and there just wasn't any sense in waiting for Jacobus and Mrs. S. to go to bed if we didn't also wait until they went to sleep.

It was some time around five a.m. when Lizzie let me out at the kitchen door.

I walked all the way home, and I guess I walked with a swagger. I waved a good morning to the bakers and the milkmen. I whistled. Sometimes I even sang. All my troubles were miraculously gone, puffed away like dust in the high October wind that swirled my coat around me. For the first time in months I was happy. I hadn't a care in the world.

It was almost daylight when I reached my digs.

My digs were on the second floor of a tenement building. At one time or another there had been a lot of girls in the flats—my own landlady had had four daughters—and the steps were neatly hollowed out in the places where the girls, over many generations, had sat canoodling with their boys. There was an especially comfortable big dent in the top stair but one, and when I reached the bend in the landing I saw that this dent was occupied.

"Robert?" a voice said in the gloom.

"Well, well, Joseph!" I said.

He came bounding down the stairs to meet me. A cone of light fell on to the landing from the 40-watt on the floor above, and we were caught in this light like flies in an upturned wineglass. I saw every jutting bone in his face, and I saw his eyes.

"Robert," he said. "They took my lion."

"I know, I know, Joseph," I said. I had my first pang of conscience then, for I owed my happiness to Joseph, and I had not thought of Joseph or Joseph's troubles for a long, long time. "Never mind," I said, "you'll get another pet. I know what, Joseph. I'll buy you a dog. A fine, big Alsatian dog. A dog is a much better pet than a lion."

"I don't want a dog," Joseph said. "I am unhappy about my lion, but I came to tell you about another thing. I am very happy about this other thing. It is beautiful and a surprise. Lizzie loves me. Jacobus's Lizzie. She loves me, Robert!"

I stared at him and he stared back at me, grinning, nodding violently, mouthing his words like an apoplectic ape. "Yes, hahaha, yes, yes, yes," he said, stuttering. "She loves me."

I saw him briefly as Jacobus must have seen him, not as a human

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being at all, but as a Thing—a monstrous and a crazy Thing. I loathed him then, and I wanted him to know it. I thrust my face at him, hating him. "Don't be a fool," I said. "You crazy deformed fool," I said. "Who do you think *you* are for Lizzie to love?"

He didn't understand.

"She loves me, Robert," he said doggedly. "She said so."

"She said so," I said, speaking very coldly and deliberately, "only in order to get rid of Rags Gorman who wanted to marry her. Do you understand that? She wanted to get rid of Rags Gorman, and the only way she could get rid of him was by saying that she loved somebody else, and when she was asked who it was that she loved she had a particular reason for not telling the truth, and so she just said the first name that came into her head and it happened to be yours. In point of fact," I said, "she is in love with me." And I jabbed my thumb into my chest. "Me. Do you understand that?"

He understood all right.

I wish now that he had not understood so well and that I had not seen his face in that moment of his understanding. His face was piteous. He stood stockstill, searching my eyes, and then, sucking his breath into his teeth, he swung away and bolted in a wild, animal-like clatter down the stairs.

When I heard the door slam below I came to my senses. I flung myself at the banister rail and shouted after him. "Joseph," I shouted, "I didn't mean it, not like that."

"Joseph!" I shouted. "Come back!"

But I don't suppose he even heard me.

WELL, I searched for Joseph everywhere. Everywhere I could think of. I went on searching day after day, but I did not find Joseph nor anyone who had seen him. Lizzie had the bright idea that he might go to the Zoo to be near his lion, but when we made enquiries at the Zoo they told us the lion was not there. The clerk whom we saw said he thought that some menagerie had claimed the lion. He could not tell us the name of the menagerie, but he seemed anxious to oblige, and he said if it was important I could leave my name and address and he would find out and send me a postcard.

"Will you *really*?" Lizzie said.

"Really," the clerk said. "Glad to." He was a tall thin man of about thirty, with very light blue eyes and a nervous tic at one corner of his mouth. He had four beautifully sharpened pencils in his breast pocket, and he looked to be the sort of man you could rely on, not in a crisis, maybe, but in the little things of life. Only, he wasn't. He never sent the postcard, and the result was that I did not learn where Joseph's lion was until three weeks later, when I also learned where Joseph was.

Joseph was in gaol.

I read about it in the noon edition of my own paper.

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BRUTAL MENAGERIE MURDER, my paper said, KEEPER KILLED.

Tragedy struck Harrap's Menagerie in broad daylight yesterday afternoon, when, as reported fully in our earlier editions, a man gained entry to the lions' cage and was driven into the eating corner by one of the young male lions.

George Gavin Gould, the deceased, a keeper at Harrap's Menagerie, entered the cage and shot the lion through the back of the head. It is alleged that the man then attacked the keeper, raising him above his head and throwing him against the bars of the cage, and that as a result of this attack the keeper sustained injuries which proved fatal.

According to the reports of eye-witnesses, the man made repeated attempts to revive the dead lion. He refused to leave the cage even under the threat of firearms, and tear gas had eventually to be used. He then collapsed on the lion's body, and the police, who made the arrest, were unable to disengage his arms from the lion's neck. It is reported that it was necessary to drag both man and lion from the cage and to summon medical assistance to prise loose the man's grip.

This tragic incident took place at three o'clock in the afternoon, and was witnessed by a large crowd of holiday-makers, including many children. See Stop Press.

The Stop Press read: SEQUEL TO MENAGERIE MURDER.

Sequel to the tragedy at Harrap's Menagerie took place this morning, when a man was charged with the wilful murder of George Gavin Gould. He gave his name as Joseph Hamilton, age unknown, professional boxer, of no fixed abode, and when asked if he wished to make a statement he said, "He killed my lion."

How I felt is not of much importance to anyone except myself, but I would like to say it, just once, and leave it at that. I felt terrible.

I went to see Joseph in Pentonville as soon as the authorization came through. They sat me down at one end of a long deal table, and after a little they brought Joseph in and sat him down at the other end. We were asked kindly to keep our hands on the table, and the warder who asked us this sat down midway between us.

I had got so used to Joseph's face that I hardly ever noticed it. Now I took a good look at it. I looked at it as I thought a juryman would, and I was appalled by what I saw.

It was a horrible face.

The forehead was low and ape-like. The eyes were obscured by monumental, fist-scarred cheek-bones. The nose had been broken at the bridge and punched right back into its base; the nostrils were upturned. The mouth was squint and puffy, and the jaw aggressive and immense. Each feature, taken separately, was sub-human, and the combination of these sub-human features was something that had to be seen to be believed. It was a brutal and degenerate face. It was undoubtedly the face of a murderer.

Joseph saw me staring and put his hand up to his throat. They had taken away his collar and tie, and he thought this was what I

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was looking at. He told me they had done this for fear he might hang himself.

"They think I'm criminal," he said. His eyes were dark and distressed, the pupils dilated, and they took a hold of mine and clung tight, like lovers' eyes. "Me," he said. "Criminal!"

"Nobody could think that who knows you," I said. I talked louder than natural, because I had been thinking precisely this myself, because I was embarrassed and unhappy, and determined to be very much at ease. "Nobody could ever think that, Joseph," I said emphatically. "I have a message from Lizzie. Lizzie sends her love. All your friends are thinking about you. We're all standing by you, Joseph."

"I have no friends," Joseph said.

That was true, of course.

"Except you," Joseph said. "Only you, Robert. The rest is not my friends at all. They say that keeping-man was a good man and I am bad, but he was a bad man and he did a bad thing. You know what he did, Robert? He killed my lion."

"I know, Joseph," I said. "I know. But, Joseph, the lion was going to kill you. He saved your life."

"He killed my lion's life," Joseph said.

"But Joseph . . ."

"No," Joseph said. "Listen, Robert. He killed my lion's life. That was a very bad thing he did."

What could I say? I looked at my hands. I folded up my fingers and stared at the nails.

"Nobody understands. But *you* will understand. Will you please understand, Robert?"

You should have seen his face then.

"Please, Robert."

"All right," I said. I'd have said anything. "All right, Joseph. I'll understand. I promise."

"This then," Joseph said. "A lion is different." He wanted to get it right. There were just certain words that would carry the idea, and he wanted desperately to find those words. He thought very hard. He tested phrases soundlessly on his lips. He stared right into me, scowling, while little beads of sweat gathered on his brow and the big wall clock ticked our precious seconds away. It was several minutes before he spoke, and then he said something like this:

"They took my lion away. The lion does not understand this. The lion does not know that anything happens except what happens to the lion. The lion does not know that there is anywhere at all except where the lion is. The lion does not know that it has been taken away from me. It thinks that I have been taken away from it. When my lion sees me again it thinks it has found me. It pushes me into a corner. It does not push me into a corner because it wishes to savage me, but because it wishes to keep me safe. My lion was keeping me safe because it loved me, and the man came and shot into it and killed it. Do you understand, Robert?"

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Welcome to the Inn

beer is best

3 *Issued by the Brewers' Society, 42 Portman Square, London, W.1*

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"I think I do, Joseph," I said. "It's a matter of psychology the way you put it. Animal psychology. But you killed the man."

"I threw him away," Joseph said. "I was angry, and I did not know if he was going to shoot into my lion again, or into me, perhaps. I was very angry."

"But you didn't mean to kill him, did you?"

"No," Joseph said.

I thought I had got something there. I saw Joseph's point of view perfectly. It was all a matter of interpretation. To you and to me and to George Gavin Gould that lion was a savage lion, about to do murder: to Joseph it was just his own friendly lion, about to lick his face. I put myself in Joseph's place and I thought with Joseph's mind (or tried to), and it all seemed perfectly reasonable, even the murder, which was no murder at all, but an act of self-defence or, at worst, of provoked assault.

I thought I had got hold of something important from a legal angle, and I tried hard, but without success, to get it over on the lawyers. The solicitor was old and tired and the barrister was young and cold. They were not impressionable men and I did not impress them. I could not get them to see the importance of this psychological point.

"Might conceivably be of use," the barrister said to the solicitor, "to supplement an insanity plea."

"But," I said, "Joseph's not mad."

They ignored me.

"I doubt—I very much doubt," the solicitor said, "if you could make such insanity as the fellow exhibits into a valid exculpatory plea."

"But I'm telling you," I said, "Joseph's not mad."

"I quite agree," the barrister said, speaking only to the solicitor. "The fellow is undoubtedly a lunatic, but if I am to bring his mental condition *sub judice* I shall clearly have the greatest difficulty in persuading them that he is a King's pleasure lunatic."

"But," I said. I kept butting.

"Young man," the barrister said, speaking directly to me for the first time, "are you trying to teach me the Law?"

"No, sir," I said.

It was hopeless.

I had been banking on that visit to the lawyers. So had Lizzie. When I told her what had happened, she broke down and cried openly, in my arms. "It's all my fault," she said. "None of this would have happened if it hadn't been for me." Lizzie was having a bad time. Ever since the night she had told the lie about being in love with the Pole they had been at her incessantly. Not Rags Gorman, of course. Rags Gorman was out of it. But Jacobus and Mrs. Stevens. Nag, nag, nag. It was worse than ever now, because now they really had something on her. Mrs. Stevens gave her no peace.

I could have killed that woman. She would even force her way into Lizzie's bedroom during the night just to tell Lizzie all over

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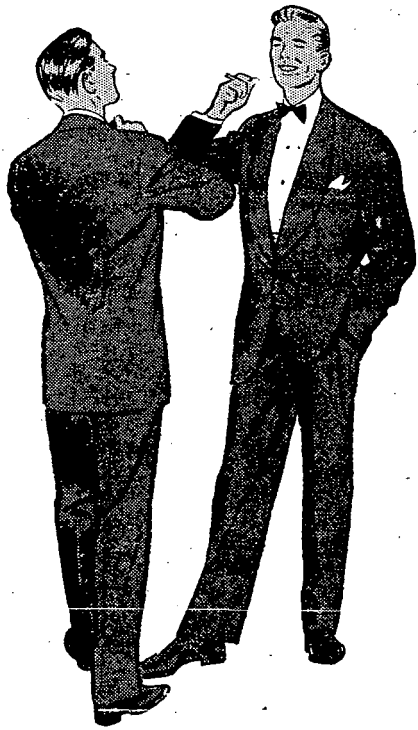

Consoling thought

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again precisely what she thought of her. And Lizzie couldn't take it. She was getting thinner and whiter every day; she had violet smudges, like shiners, under her eyes; and her skin was so fine you could see through it. She was beginning to have a dangerously delicate look, and I did not like it at all. "Everything they say about me is true," she said. "I spoil everything for everybody, and this is all my fault."

I held her very tight and scratched her head and babied her. I told her it was crazy to worry; what had happened wasn't her fault, wasn't even her business. I told her that she was making a great fuss about nothing. Oh, I said all the reassuring things. I even said that Joseph would get off.

"Do you think he will, Robert?"

"Course he will," I said, my mouth in her hair.

"Do you *really* think so?"

"I'm certain of it," I said.

But I wasn't certain, of course. At best, I was hopeful. I hoped that they would amend the charge to manslaughter.

Gus gave me time off for the duration of the trial, and I was first in the gallery queue both days and got the end seat by the dock. This was the best seat in the Court, and the one nearest to Joseph.

Joseph pleaded Not Guilty, but there was no argument as to the facts. Joseph had assaulted George Gavin Gould. He had picked him up and thrown him against the bars of the cage, and as a result of this violence George Gavin Gould had died. The Defence called witnesses to prove that the deceased had been suffering from a disease called cardiac something, and the inference was that he had not taken a lot of killing.

They put Joseph in the Box and asked him simple questions. They asked, "Did you wish to kill this man? Did you mean to kill this man? Did you know that you had killed this man?" And each time Joseph said, "No."

The counsel for the Defence was not the one I had seen in the Solicitor's Chambers; the one I had seen then was only the Junior, this one was a middle-aged man; he looked a distinguished and capable lawyer and I think he was; he made it quite clear to me, and I hoped he had also made it clear to the Jury that Joseph's action was unpremeditated, and that he had never had the slightest intention of killing.

"This is a case of manslaughter," he said. "And manslaughter only."

The question of Joseph's sanity was debated at length. Two alienists were called. One was on Joseph's side and one wasn't. The one who wasn't said that Joseph was suffering from a disease called "systematized delusional insanity," and that this meant that he was mad.

The friendly one disagreed. He admitted that Joseph had a paranoid mental constitution, but he said that this was a common mental state, many sane people had it, and that all one could say about such people was that they showed a tendency to develop a

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systematized delusional insanity. "Compare this man's mental state to a soil," he said. "It is a soil which is prone to grow a particular weed, but I have found no sign that the weed has in fact grown in it."

The Judge was a little, bird-like man, and he thrust his face over the Bench and pecked impatiently at this alienist. "Your metaphors would no doubt be of interest to a Horticultural Society," he said. "But let us have the blunt facts in this Court. Is he responsible for his actions?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Then that is all we want to know," the Judge said. "He is sane."

It was all over by the forenoon of the second day. The jury, after retiring for only eleven minutes, returned a verdict of guilty of murder, with a recommendation to mercy; and the Judge, on passing sentence, declared that owing to the precarious state of the deceased's health he approved and endorsed the jury's recommendation, but was himself unable to give it effect.

"I sentence you, Joseph Hamilton," he said, "to be hanged by the neck until you are dead."

Joseph swallowed and leaned forward towards me. He opened his mouth, closed it again, and shook his head.

The policemen turned him unobtrusively and led him down the steps.

I watched the back of Joseph's head for what seemed a very long time, and when at last it disappeared from sight, I put my arms on the gallery rail and hid my face in my arms, and cried.

Afterwards, I went to Jacobus's place. I had promised Lizzie that I would come straight to her with the verdict. I whistled at the foot of the back stairs, and Lizzie came down at a run, wiping her hands on her apron, her eyes hooked into mine.

"Well?" she said.

"Not so good, Lizzie," I said. I cleared my throat.

"Go on. Tell me," she said.

"They found him guilty."

She made a small noise inside her shut mouth.

"But they'll never hang him," I said. "The jury recommended mercy and the Judge did, too. They say he'll only get a few years.

"Stop crying, Lizzie," I said. "There's nothing to cry about.

"Darling," I said. "Darling, don't. It's not your fault. It's not anybody's fault. Joseph'll be all right."

She was crying terribly.

I took her in my arms. I didn't care if Jacobus or Mrs. Stevens saw. I didn't care for anybody. "It's all right, darling," I said. "You mustn't take it like this. Be reasonable, sweetheart. This is not your affair. Why should you blame yourself?"

"Why?" Lizzie said, tearing herself free. "Because I love him, that's why.

"You fool," Lizzie said ferociously. "I *love* him."

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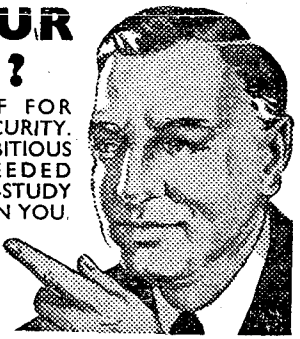

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I knew immediately that it was true, but my voice went on in spite of me. "But you couldn't," my voice said. And it picked on the least of a thousand good reasons. "You just couldn't, Lizzie. He's so ugly."

"Beautiful," she said, almost screaming. "He's got the most beautiful body in the world, and I love him, do you hear!" And she began to cry again, differently—quietly and hopelessly—her hands flat on her face. "He's so sweet," she said. "Oh, Joseph. I love him. I didn't know it, but I know now. Ah, Joseph."

I just stood there and looked at her. I couldn't say anything. There wasn't a single thing left for me to say.

"I'm sorry, Robert," Lizzie said.

Well, that's about all.

The following week Joseph's sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, i.e. fifteen years, and a day or two later I got word from the *Record* Office that they at last had a vacancy in the Sub-Editors' Room. They offered me the job at seven-ten a week, which was—or, rather, would have been—quite enough for us to get married on.

I THINK it only fair to say that there is probably not a great deal of truth in this account of Joseph and Lizzie and Jacobus and Mrs. Stevens and Rags Gorman. I have told the truth as I saw it at twenty-one, but the truth as you see it at twenty-one is not the whole truth by a long chalk, and I suspect now that I was not a very intelligent twenty-one.

I saw only a little of what was going on, and I understood only a little of what I saw. I had a melodramatic mind. I saw villainy where none existed, and it wouldn't surprise me to learn that Jacobus is really a nice little man, that Rags Gorman is an honest and enterprising book-maker, and that even Mrs. Stevens has her good points. I am painfully aware that people are not so easy to understand as I once thought they were.

Take Lizzie, for instance.

Lizzie married Rags Gorman. Yes, she finally married Rags Gorman after all. I didn't believe it at first, but there can be no argument about it. They live in a big house out Esher way and have two fine boys. Lizzie does her shopping in a Daimler. I have seen her once or twice, though not to speak to, and I must say that she looks well. She is getting slightly plump, but it suits her. She is as pretty as ever, and in addition she has an amiable and contented look. I am sure she has no regrets.

And Joseph.

I am allowed to visit Joseph once a year and do so religiously. He has settled down to prison life. He is "on the land," as they say inside, and it is just the job for him. He has charge of two fine Suffolk mares, shares the responsibility for the pigs, and is hoping for the milk cows. He thinks there is a very good chance that he will get the milk cows when the cowman is discharged next year. He is still fond of birds and has a wide range of bird friends. It

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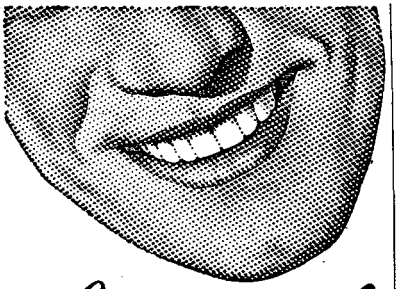

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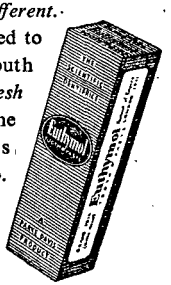

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I couldn't ever bring myself to tell Joseph that Lizzie had married Rags Gorman. I was under the impression that Joseph thought that Lizzie was waiting for him and that the news would be a great shock to him, but I was as mistaken about this as I was about everything else, for I learned recently that the Gormans have been visiting Joseph each year since their marriage and that Rags has even promised to find him a job when he comes out.

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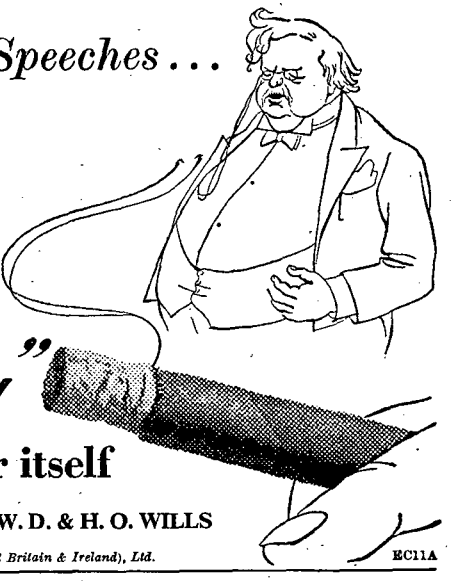

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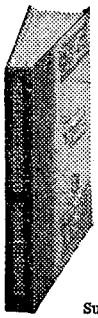

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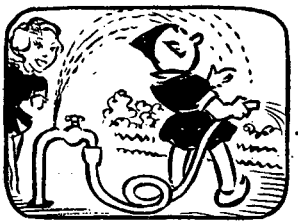

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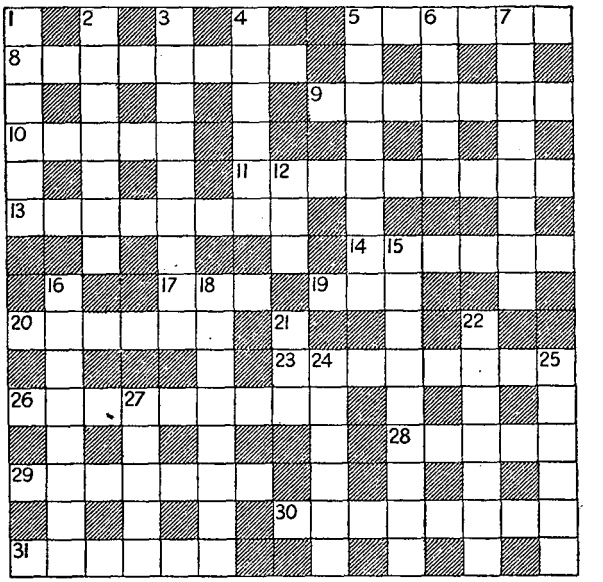
Solution on page 100



CLUES

Across

5 A fine one with fish in it means trouble is brewing (6).

8 A good place to go wool-gathering (5-3).

9 Coconut titbit which was made of sterner stuff in Egypt (7).

10 Sorel is the opposite of a winner (5).

11 He may live in Limehouse, but he is not necessarily an Oriental (4, 5).

13 Ed finds hot sun at this resort (8).

14 Worried, by a horse, perhaps (6).

17 The sort of profit that fishermen should make (3).

19 Do you know this wood? (3).

20 "The devil's walking —— Of all four-footed things" (G. K. Chesterton) (6).

23 Skill is effort—but at a very high level (8).

26 A non-clerical model? (3, 6).

28 The higher—and most substantial—part of the evening meal (5).

29 A deposit which might be found in its head (7).

30 It sounds as if unconcealed pain will catch up on us! (8).

31 We are the end and object of this count (6).

Down

1 Songs which end on a charitable note (6).

2 This should certainly appear on the menu in foggy weather (3, 4).

3 It means arrest. Understand? (9).

4 "Jacob's ladder Pitched betwixt —— and Charing Cross" (Francis Thompson) (6).

5 Arch-support, in a manner of speaking (8).

6 There was only one of him, mark you! (5).

7 Trio reel in which a laggard participates (8).

12 This girl is the same whichever way you look at her (3).

15 The novel collector of Scott (9).

16 Delius invites us to walk in these gardens (8).

18 A singular spectacle? (3-5).

21 But this is the reverse of an obstruction to having a drink (3).

22 The function of a temporary filling, for example (4-3).

24 The Engineers depart elsewhere (6).

25 A white rose might be the badge of the class of bowler who delivers this sort of ball (6).

27 "—— doubt the maw-crammed beast?" (Robert Browning) (5).

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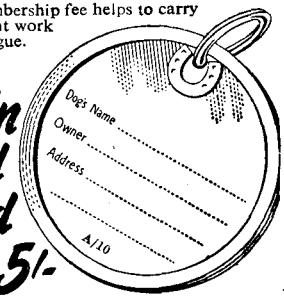

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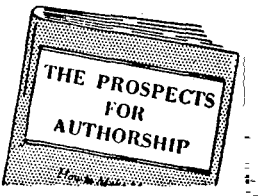

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